Words about Words about Art:

Analysis of Meaning in Art Museum Gallery Texts

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SYNOPSIS

The texts in the gallery spaces of art museum– in particular, wall texts, hand-outs and interpretive labels on the walls near the works – ostensibly mediate the art and enable visitors' interpretive experiences, however open-ended those experiences may be. Yet even when a text provides interpretive cues about an artwork, it simultaneously points to 'yonder' meanings, for instance to the museum's own institutional aims and agendas, to assumptions about visitors, to the authority of the author and the artist, to ideological assumptions, political/historical issues, the exigencies of writing something short, or any number of other meanings.

In this M.A. thesis, I explore these meanings by analysing the gallery texts from two permanent exhibitions at Bergen Art Museum – *J.C. Dahl* and *Babel* – and one permanent exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London: *Constable, Turner and the Exhibition Landscape*. I pursue three research questions. First, I look into how the gallery texts generate meaning by analysing some of the tools used to produce them.

Secondly, I inquire into what the gallery texts can mean above and beyond providing cursory information and interpretation of the art. This I do through close readings of the selected texts and through comparative analysis of what I see as the most important tools used in the three case studies. Thirdly, I inquire into the relation between the text formats and the discourses and meanings they enable.

The method of analysis used in these case studies provides a calibrated set of tools for analysing mediational texts in the gallery spaces of many an art museum. The analyses complement studies of exhibition design and gallery display and other research on interpretive practices in art museums. It reappraises the assumption that the texts one finds in the gallery spaces of art museums are there mainly to mediate and interpret the art.

Key words: art mediation, *kunstformidling*, museum text, education, art museums

1. Introduction

This research paper is about the texts that mediate art in the gallery spaces of art museums.[1] The initial goal of these texts – I limit the scope to wall texts, hand-outs and extended or interpretive labels on the walls near the artworks – is usually open-ended.[2] This is because art museums, like other museums, are places for informal learning (Falk & Dierking 1992; Diamond et al. 2009:11-17). Nevertheless, while having an open-ended goal, the texts are clearly meant to provide some sort of interpretative experience which is conceived as an emotional, aesthetic and/or cognitive experience of the art.[3] I therefore understand my study objects (soon to be introduced) as interpretive texts.[4] But having said this, the texts in question do *far more* than interpret the art, and it is this 'more' that is the spur for this research project.

Reading a gallery text, one may find that it points to the art in some respects but in other respects points to the museum's own institutional aims and agendas, to assumptions about visitors, to the authority of the author and the artist, to ideological assumptions, to political/historical issues, to government directives, to the exigencies of writing something short, or any number of meanings. This project is thus an inquiry into the wide array of meanings in the gallery texts of three case studies – it looks into what those meanings are and into the devices used to produce them.

Research questions

Three research questions intertwine: *How do the texts in art museum gallery spaces point beyond their immediate meanings? What do the texts mean above and beyond providing*

[1] 'Gallery' refers only to a museum gallery, not an independent art gallery that sells art.

[2] Numerous suggestions have been made for what the open-ended goal might be: to learn relevant contextual information; to construct multiple meanings; to breathe life into an artwork in a way that contributes to its durably; to gain greater knowledge and understanding of art and to connect with it personally; to have deep experiences that are different from everyday experience; to be educated, delighted and uplifted (Burnham & Kai-Kee 2011:1-15); to alter one's experience of the world, to sharpen and heighten one's sensitivities to it, so that one can 'walk away at a different angle to the world' (Cuno 2004:73). The latter suggestions link the goal of gallery texts with *Bildung*. A goal I would add to this list is that the gallery texts can enable 'absorptive' experiences: 'filling the field of experience, and absorbing the viewer's gaze and thoughts' (Fried, quoted in Walsh 2004:84). Fried's (1980) focus is on the artwork's absorptive power, whereas Walsh's concern is to create conditions for the museum visitor's absorption in the works. The notion of 'time standing still', as when one is engrossed in a good movie, is an apt analogy.

[3] I draw on Burnham & Kai-Kee (2011:64-65), who draw on John Dewey's book *Art as Experience* (1934), especially his view that in order to have an experience of art, one must become somehow emotionally involved.

[4] Here is a likely scenario that highlights the interpretive quality of a gallery text: an artwork catches your eye and you start exploring it. You reflect on possible meanings, maybe discuss it with a friend, draw on your own horizon of understanding and then you read a text. You try to make a synthesis of possible meanings, alternating your gaze back and forth between the artwork and the text. There are innumerable possibilities for how an interpretive experience unfolds, and it certainly is not necessary to read gallery texts, but the experience will always involve your personal context (horizon of understanding, your social context (other people around you) and your physical context (texts, lighting, wall colours, benches, etc., cf. Falk & Dierking 1992).

cursory information or interpretation? What is the relation between a text's format and the meaning it enables? I preface my initial comments on these questions by stressing that it is not my intention to judge which of my study objects best enables interpretive experiences of art. The first question relates to practical aspects of the means used to produce the texts. These can also be called devices or tools or instruments of communication – examples are the parts of speech, syntax, modality, text genres, authoritative expressions, interpretive frames and discourses (see Chapter 2). By doing a close reading, it should be possible to understand more about why the gallery texts are as they are; why certain means rather than others are commonly used and what their presence or absence may imply.

The second question concerns wider meaning. I want to know what the analysis of gallery texts can reveal about the 'power tools' used to produce them and the possible meaning on other levels. I say 'power tools' because by virtue of existing in a text in a certain order, the tools generate meanings, also those extending beyond interpreting art. With this second research question there follows an attendant hope: to better grasp the contingent, social constructedness of the interpretive frames and discourses in gallery texts – to stop seeing them as natural.[5]

The third question concerns format. It is important because the format used to present a text is an enabler or disabler of discourses. Today, the gallery texts that art museums have traditional used for mediating art – wall texts, hand-outs and interpretive labels on the walls near the artworks – are partly being superseded by smartphone aps, iPhone guides and so forth. This is why I limit the research scope to these three types of texts; by inquiring into the 'old fashioned' gallery text types, it should be possible to detect the relation between the format and meaning it makes possible, and in turn to understand more about what is lost and gained when implementing the new technology's formats (this latter inquiry is not however included in the present project's scope).

[5] Although a work's interpretation may seem firmly fixed, even by science-based research, the next time it is pulled from the magazine the interpretive frames and discourses the museum deems expedient for helping the public experience it may have changed. What nineteenth-century museum visitor would have anticipated that the artist's intentions would become a largely defunct interpretive frame? As a thought experiment, if a Hellenistic mind set was applied to label writing, Aristotle's four causes would probably provide the schema: the material cause (e.g., marble), the efficient cause (the craftsman's name), the formal cause (the work's subject, say Hercules), and the final cause (why the sculptor made it, e.g., to honour an athlete). If a Medieval mind set was applied, the patron's name would be on the label, not the artisan's. If starting from the Pythagorean belief that numbers are the common denominators of all experience, it seems logical to read that a museum possesses 24,000 works, no matter their quality. The works could be talked about using Natural Colour System numbers interwoven with a social history discourse: how often the work was shot at, the amount paid for it. Today, Hollywood stars and businesses need to be seen as supporting humanitarian causes. This is becoming important for today's artists too (just one example: at Ingjerd Hanevold's January 2013 exhibition at Kunstnerforbundet, one installation was linked to her involvement with a project meant to help women in Afghanistan) and it may eventually become standard information in interpretive labels.

Study objects: what they are and why I chose them

My study objects stem from three exhibitions: Bergen Art Museum's (BKM) *J.C. Dahl* exhibition (my primary study objects are from this exhibition); the Victoria and Albert Museum's (V&A) Room 87, *Turner-Constable and the Exhibitionary Landscape*; and BKM's *Babel* exhibition of contemporary art.

In 2003 I translated some texts for BKM's J.C. Dahl exhibition. I have translated texts for many art exhibitions in Norway, but this exhibition remains one of the most interesting to me because when visiting Norway as a tourist in 1984, Dahl's paintings were some of the first things I encountered on my first day in the country. I followed the meandering paths in Dahl's landscapes and became absorbed in their receding planes. These paintings functioned as an introduction to Norway's most celebrated landscape, traditional cultural identity and self-understanding. So when thinking about texts I could imagine devoting a lot of time to in a research project, the Dahl exhibition was a clear first choice. The two texts which are my main study objects were written in 2003: 1) a wall text positioned at the entrance to the Dahl wing, 2) an A4 hand-out called *J.C. DAHL (1788-1857*). To add a comparative angle to the analysis of these study objects, I also include BKM's 2012 webpage/annual program which mentions the Dahl exhibition.

There are yet other reasons for choosing these study objects. BKM is in the process of remounting its permanent collection exhibitions at Lysverket.[6] The contents and style of texts from the last decade will be replaced by something new. In April 2011, I visited the Dahl gallery with BKM curator Frode Sandvik and was told that the labelling and wall texts now in place are 'good in many ways, but we know we can do better. There is so much more information we could give, and ways of mediation that could engage the public more fully'. Imminent changes to the Dahl gallery signal the close of a chapter in BKM's mediational endeavours, so it seems worthwhile analysing the Dahl texts to explicate what the museum already has, and the transience of the scriptovisual phenomena.

My secondary study objects are the V&A's 1) primary wall text for the paintings galleries; 2) the wall text for room 87 entitled *Turner-Constable and the Exhibitionary Landscape*; 3) the individual interpretive labels for works in room 87. In stark contrast to texts about National Romantic paintings are BKM's *Babel* 4) wall text and 5) interpretive labels.

[6] Lysverket is one of BKM's three premises located in the centre of Bergen.

The V&A's efforts to mediate its collections to the public, when seen in light of the museum's history, make its exhibition an interesting case for comparative analysis. The V&A was founded in 1852, with the purpose of educating the whole nation, not merely designers and craft artists. It was, claims former director Mark Jones, 'the first museum in the world to have education as its primary purpose'.[7] Without going into all the whys and wherefores, in the 1980s and '90s the V&A was restructured. With this came changes in profiling, exhibition programing and – important for my research – mediation.

It is worth quoting Lord Armstrong, chairman of V&A Trustees, who, when defending the restructuring reforms, cited the need to 'improve the accessibility and attractiveness of the museum to the general public and to play a greater part in public education'. He claimed the reforms were a result of the museum's trustees being 'new museologists' and a 'fulfilment of the public responsibility' which had 'inspired the founders' (Armstrong, House of Lords debate 1989). The change in mediation strategies can be witnessed in the gallery texts. There has been, says Ruth Adams (2010:36), a 'move away from the object-based research that had previously been dominant and toward research that [is] less art historical and more grounded in wider history and society'. The goal of re-writing gallery texts is, she says in the same passage, at least in part to 'communicate to the museum's general audience'.[8]

Since 1990, the V&A has conducted extensive research on gallery text writing and presentation, also doing quantitative and qualitative interviews of large visitor samples. Research questions it has pursued concern, among other things, the use of italics, the height of text on the wall, the level of language, readers' grasp of label content, visitor's reading speed, the interpretive frames used in labels, and research on the Swedish Ekarved format.[9] Finally, the museum has published a *10 Point Guide*, which gives insight into the theory underlying its gallery text-writing practice. So while the V&A texts may not represent today's benchmark or

[7] http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/e/education-in-museums-what-should-happen-next/ (accessed 3 October 2012). See also http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1989/mar/22/victoria-and-albert-museum for Lord Armstrong's speech in the House of Lords debate (accessed 4 November 2012).

[8] An instructive example of the changed focus in label writing is the comparison of a label from the 1970s with its rewriting in the 1990s. (The object to which this label corresponds looks like a framed miniature portrait.) *1970s label:* MIRROR FRAME / Painted Cartapesta (papier mâché) / Workshop of NEROCCIO DEI LANDI (1447-1550) / SIENNESE; last quarter of the 15th century / 850-1884 / This type of mirror frame, showing an emblematic female head, exists in several examples in various media; a maiolica version (C.2111-1910) is exhibited in room 14. This work is characteristic of NEROCCIO DEI LANDI, who trained under Vecchietta and was active in Sienna both as a painter and a sculptor. *Revised label*: MIRROR FRAME / About 1475-1500 / Workshop of Neroccio dei Landi (1447-1550) / The mirror, which is now missing, would have been a disc of blown glass or polished metal. As well as being an expensive novelty, mirrors were thought to reveal the inner truth. This frame invited a moral comparison, since the viewer's face appeared below the beautiful (and therefore virtuous) image above. / Italy, Siena / Painted cartapesta (papier mâché) / Museum no. 850-1884 / V&A, Room 17, Renaissance 1400-1600 (Trench 2009:5-6).

[9] (cf. http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/a/about-our-visitor-research) (accessed 13 October 2012).

best practice, they have been cogitated over, researched at length, and little has been left to happenstance. This is why I deem them an interesting case for comparative analysis.

The *Babel* exhibition texts are an interesting case to compare with the Dahl texts because they are produced within the same museum but approximately ten years later, after BKM became part of the consolidated Art Museums of Bergen. BKM then gained a new organizational structure. *Babel* presents contemporary art. The strong contrast between contemporary art and National Romantic landscapes might make it easier to identify similarities and differences in the devices used to produce the texts. Like the Turner-Constable exhibition, *Babel* has individual interpretive labels, so it may be possible to identify similarities in how the interpretive label format works, regardless of the type of art.

To give a brief preliminary comparison: Both the Dahl and the V&A exhibitions were mounted in 2003 and consist of National Romantic landscape paintings. The Dahl exhibition is a one-artist permanent exhibition and partly chronologically organized. It has had one wall text and an A4 hand-out. The V&A exhibition is constructed around a theme and presents a group of artists via two wall texts and individual interpretive labels. *Babel* is similar to the V&A exhibition in that it is theme-based, concerns a group of artists and uses interpretive labels. It is similar to the Dahl and the V&A exhibition in being permanent (with modifications).[10]

About doing research on material I myself have had a hand in creating

The English texts in BKM's *Dahl* and *Babel* galleries are based on Norwegian texts produced by the museum's authors. The translations are largely my doing but are edited by BKM's authors. I am not the author, but since my external voice mingles with the author, I am a 'stakeholder' in a way that may be problematic for doing research. As sociologist Venke Johansen (2012:14) points out, personal involvement in a study object may affect the validity and reliability of findings. My familiarity, for instance, with problems related to writing something short may cause me to overlook the implications of shortening devices.[11]

To defend my decision to use BKM's texts; I do so because I am curious about what the analysis will reveal about texts already known to me on other levels. Johansen, in the afore-mentioned passage, asserts that personal involvement can strengthen one's research. She

[10] I would like to thank Tove Haugsbø for her discussion on this preliminary comparison.
[11] Museums have been called *ingressinstitusjoner*. In Norwegian newswriting, *ingress* refers to subheadings such as 'article teasers'. The newswriting analogy is apt because museum texts tend to focus on main points more than detailed explanations. Cf. p. 115 of *Museum: Mangfald, minne, møtestad* NOU 1996:7. http://www.regjeringen.no/Rpub/NOU/19961996/007/PDFA/NOU199619960007000DDDPDFA.pdf (21 Feb. 2013).

draws on Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1975:302-307) 'horizon' concept, which in my case concerns my understanding of texts based on having translated them. The experience triggers me to formulate presuppositions about the wider meanings and implications of art museum texts. In everyday life, presuppositions are called prejudices and tend to be seen as negative, but according to Gadamer, they are useful in the research situation – if I am aware of them and the boundaries they set, I can put my presuppositions at risk, countenance other understandings and create a 'fusion of horizons'. What, then, are the presuppositions of which I am aware, and what do I hypothesize about the findings my research will produce?

Presuppositions (prejudices) and hypotheses[12]

Three presuppositions concern what gallery texts *should* be like, and a fourth concerns the art museum experience as a whole. They all relate in some respect to my personal involvement with the study objects and can affect my research and findings. First, I accept the idea that art museums are *ingressinstitusjoner* (footnote 11). I favour short texts using everyday language, especially if they are meant to be read standing. Second, I favour texts that aim to incorporate the reader's own lifeworld in the interpretive experience. Third, if a text points to elements acknowledged through the senses, this helps reader-viewers sense them. There may be something there, but chances are visitors will not notice it unless it is indexed. Seeing and knowing are inextricably linked, but more often than not, seeing depends on already knowing more often than knowing on seeing. Fourth, my idea of an optimal art museum experience does not really involve reading text. It would be where small groups of people look at the artworks together and engage in conversation. If at least one person in the group is quite knowledgeable about the art from the outset, then this situation holds the opportunity for an even more rewarding interpretive experience.

Possible consequences of these presuppositions for my research situation are that I may be blind to the benefits of longer texts using more specialized language, or texts that do not overtly invite visitor involvement. I may play favourites with texts emphasizing things in front of the viewer's nose. These are things I need to watch out for.

Five hypotheses seem most salient at the outset of this project:

[12] I defer presenting theoretical presuppositions until Chapter 2.

1) *Analysing my study objects can tell me some specific things about BKM and the V&A's historical, institutional, ideological and cultural aims, and about the relation between a text's contents and its format.*
2) *Of the three cases, the texts for the two National Romantic exhibitions will be the most similar in terms of the devices, discourses and interpretive frames that are used. The Babel texts will be most different from the Dahl texts.*
3) *For all the study objects, the most dominant discourse and interpretive frames will concern art history.*
4) *The ethos of the time when the art was produced, the artworld and social world of that era, will have greater impact on the discourses and frames used than will the museums' institution-oriented aims.*
5) *The V&A texts will differ from the BKM texts by being geared towards a wider public through the use of easier language and the inclusion of more social history and devices for activating or involving readers.*

To elucidate a bit (following the order of the hypotheses): 1) by analysing my study objects, I posit that I will be able to notice meanings which do not specifically pertain to mediating the artworks on show. Some of these meanings will, I suppose, pertain to the mediating institution – the museum. Certain meanings will be enhanced or thwarted by the format through which they are presented.

2) The National Romantic exhibitions will, I presume, reveal strong similarities in devices since the artworks are from the same time period and share similar themes. Since the works are by National Romantic painters, I expect to find a National Romantic discourse. However, National Romanticism will be subordinate to an art history discourse, since I know the text writers are art historians.

3) The writers being art historians will, I assume, mean that all the texts are written from an art historical perspective.

4) Hypothesis four accounts for why I posit that the texts for the National Romantic exhibitions will show the greatest similarity. I base the hypothesis on a statement by art historian Dag Sveen: 'Our century's art history has largely looked at artworks as expressions of the artist's personality, as expressions for *an ethos of the time,* or as expressions for a painter-academic tradition' (Sveen 1988:42).[13] If the hypothesis is falsified, then the Dahl and

[13] 'For vårt århundres kunsthistorie har nemlig i så stor grad sett på kunstverk som uttrykk for en kunstnerpersonlighet, for *en tidsånd* eller som uttrykk for en maler-/akademitradisjon […]' (my italics).

Babel exhibition texts will be most similar. If it is corroborated, then the Babel texts will have a more divergent set of discourses and interpretive frames than the Dahl texts.

5) As for hypothesis five, I assume the V&A's primary discourse will be art history but that it will be intertwined with social history and interpretive frames intended to appeal to the general public more than art historians, since this would make the texts coincide with the museum's aims after the reforms implemented in the 1990s.

Road map

With the above serving as introduction, I devote Chapter 2 to presenting theoretical aspects undergirding my study. The latter part of Chapter 2 is a presentation and discussion of my research methods. Chapter 3 presents a close reading of the gallery texts for BKM's *J.C. Dahl* exhibition. Chapter 4 has two main parts: Part I presents comparative analysis of the texts for the V&A's *Turner, Constable and the Exhibition Landscape*, and Part II presents analysis of BKM's *Babel* exhibition. In Chapter 5 I present findings, further comparative analysis and reflections culled from the study.

2. Theory and Method

Part I of this chapter introduces the literature I have used for constructing my analytical methods and from which I have drawn theoretical and practical insights. Along with this I discuss key definitions, theoretical assumptions, and what I believe are their implications for my research project. Part II is devoted to methods. I elucidate the progression of research and present my 'toolbox', which consists of questions for probing the devices (strategies, discourses, interpretive frames and so forth) used in the gallery texts. The chapter ends with an acknowledgment of a drawback with the project's method and scope.

PART I

Main literature

For theoretical literature, I have drawn on Marianne Winther Jørgensen and Louise Phillip's *Diskursanalyse som teory og metode* (1999). This book presents, among other things, an introduction to Norman Fairclough's 'discourse analysis' and Ernest Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's 'discourse theory'.[14] I also draw on Fairclough's *Critical Discourse Analysis* (1995). To flesh out theory with practical examples, I take recourse in how other researchers have done close readings of texts dealing with themes as diverse as breast-cancer awareness (Johansen 2012), child welfare (Engebretsen 2007), and (perhaps surprisingly) the discursive construction of the relationship between pigs and humans (Stibbe 2003). Jørgensen and Phillip's (1999:169-201) analysis of a 'national discourse' also offers a practical example. One of the beauties of such analysis, therefore, is how it can be used to study social phenomena from any field using symbolic language. My main reason for reading the above mentioned works is to cull ideas about text analysis in general and to gather tools – questions – for analysing mediational texts in art museums.

For examples of art museum text analysis, I draw on Christopher Whitehead's *Interpreting Art in Museums and Galleries* (2012). In addition, *Gallery Text at the V&A: A Ten Point Guide*, by Lucy Trench (2009), is useful for understanding the main theoretical principles underlying the V&A's text writing practices. I augment Whitehead and Trench with Louise J. Ravelli's *Museum Texts: Communication Frameworks* (2006) and Beverly Serrell's *Exhibition Labels: An Interpretive Approach* (1996). Intended for writers working in all types

[14] In referring to my own work, I use the term 'analysis' but do not mean to imply that I follow Fairclough only. I use it in a more general sense.

of museums, these works also contain examples of gallery text analysis. Although criticizing art is not the objective of gallery text writers, there is overlapping between critical statements and mediational statements about art. This is because the critic writes on behalf of the receiver, and the museum mediator writes on behalf of the museum, the receiver and perhaps also the artist (at least usually with respect for the artist). Hence I also draw insights from Monroe Beardsley's discussion on the 'intentional fallacy' in *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (1958/1981). More will be said about these thinkers throughout the chapter. Before going further, it is worthwhile presenting some definitions of concepts that are central to my inquiry: *discourse, discursive practice, discourse order, interpretive frames* and the *external relationships of discourses.*

Definitions

Discourse and ***discursive practice.*** 'Discourse', in a wide sense, denotes language used to talk about a certain social domain (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:9), for instance Norway's art scene or Feminism. Just at this point it makes sense to voice Gloria Steinem's complaint about academics having to say 'discourse' if they simply mean 'talk'![15] But Fairclough (1995:358) offers a narrower definition highlighting the representational function of discourses:

> A *discourse* is a particular way of representing certain parts or aspects of the (physical, social, psychological) world; for instance, there are different political discourses (liberal, conservative, social-democratic, etc.) which represent social groups and relations between social groups in a society in different ways.

If one accepts the idea of there being different discourses for representing one and the same set of aspects of the social world, then one can think of discursive practice as a mode or pattern of speaking or writing that organizes and gives meaning to those selected aspects from a certain perspective. The idea of a discourse as language offering a certain perspective on something readily ties in with the notion of 'interpretive frames' discussed below. Fairclough speaks of discourses as embedded in complex relations:

> '[W]e can only arrive at an understanding of [discourse] by analysing *sets of relations*. Having said that, we can say what it is in particular that discourse brings into the

[15] http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/jan/17/gender.melissadenes [28 February 2013]

> complex relations which constitute social life: meaning, and meaning making' (Fairclough 1995:3, my italics).

Here Fairclough emphasizes something I want to be mindful of in my research: a discourse cannot be defined independently from other social relations, that is, contexts.

Laclau and Mouffe, in their discourse theory, would agree with Fairclough here, yet hold that discourses construe the *entirety* of the social world. Fairclough would only say discourses are 'one of several aspects of every social practice' (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:15). Thus Laclau and Mouffe go farther in the direction of anti-realism. Intellectually, I side with Fairclough on this point because it is not illogical to believe that non-discursive aspects exist and partly constitute social practices. But in a more practical sense, since everything I cognitively access is 'tainted' by symbolic language, I find it impossible to name an aspect that is not circumscribed in language of some sort, thus in discourses. I will say more about this when discussing theoretical presuppositions, but suffice it to say at this point, the idea – that discourses bring meaning to a social world, say the artworld – strikes me as a good way of conceiving of the interpretive text practices of art museums.

Coinciding with the idea that discourses generate a social world's meaning, Laclau and Mouffe acknowledge that this meaning can never be fixed due to language's mutable nature (cf. Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:15). This coheres with my assumption that the meaning of an artwork cannot be fixed. But Laclau and Mouffe also make another useful assertion for my research context: there can be no 'universal discourse' in which to inscribe knowledge. Many 'discursive formations' exist – for instance Marxism – but none are '*the* truth of society' (Laclau & Mouffe 1985:3, original stress). To give an artworld example; a Formalist discourse can be applied to all art, and give meaning, but it cannot be conceived as able to deliver exhaustive truth about art. Because discourses are non-universal and mutable, they can conflict and struggle for *hegemony*, each trying to determine the meaning of the social phenomena, in my case art. As Jørgensen and Phillips explain (1999:3), a discursive pattern may seem fixed but it is nevertheless contingent and could have been otherwise. An example in Western culture is the notion of marriage as being between a man and a woman, rather than between two people of the same sex. In the Norwegian artworld context, a recent example is the conflict at the National Gallery over whether the permanent exhibition could be arranged thematically rather than chronologically. The pattern is as it is on account of the discursive regime holding sway in the particular context.

Laclau and Mouffe's stress on hegemony points to the *relationships* which are also crucial for Fairclough (1995:3). He underscores the complex sets of relationships found *internally*, within discourses, and *externally*, between the particular discourse and other social objects. With respect to internal relationships, I can study the relationships on a more micro-level, between the signs in sentences – say the parts of speech and how they point beyond themselves to underlying, albeit mutable meanings – but also the 'inter-discursive' aspects in sentences, for instance, 'the mixing of genres, discourses and styles' within one and the same text (Fairclough 1995:360). With respect to external relationships, I can scrutinize how a study object relates to other social objects, for example, other interpretive texts in museums, political directives, manuals for gallery text-writing, technological gadgetry used in museal contexts, tourist brochures – the list seems virtually endless. I will return to the theme of external relations when discussing my comparative analytical method, but at this point – to explain how I choose to understand the discourse concept – a few words are in order about distinguishing between discourses.

Where does one discourse end and another begin? A discourse can be as narrow as, say, the discussion about the meaning made by the 'sj' sound in someone's idiolect. This discursive field would be tangential to a discourse on the word 'shoe', which is part of the discourse on footwear, which is part of the discourse on sartorial meaning, which is part of the discourse on the global textile industry, and so on. This creates a picture of smaller discourses contained within larger ones, rather like Russian dolls, but with none of the discourses being fully discrete. Fairclough (1995), in two essays, admits that a central question concerns boundaries between discourses; after all, if one is to analyse 'relations *between* discourses', they should be ontologically as well as epistemologically and analytically different (1995:357). '[E]ntities [discourses]', he says, 'may be sharply or loosely divided, strongly or weakly insulated from each other' (1995:185). They are different, he asserts, but 'not discrete, in the sense that other elements of the social [world], in being socially constructed through discourse, come to incorporate or "internalise" particular discursive elements (including particular discourses) without being reducible to them' (1995:357). In the first essay (1995:185) he speaks of a social practice being transformed into a discourse when it is recontextualized; it has classifications or divisions imposed on it, all according to the different positions in the recontextualizing practice. If this is the case, for my purposes, the social practices which are transformed into discourses are the practices museum personnel use to write mediational texts about art. To instantiate how I chose to apply Fairclough's ideas on the distinctions between discourses, I would say that a discourse on 'the artist's *biography* as

a means for interpreting the work', and a discourse on '*artistic practice* as a means for interpreting the work' lack precise boundaries, but that the way the two are contextualized will provide sufficient but non-comprehensive classificatory division.

Discursive order. A 'discursive order' is something an analyst identifies in a social space, say the artworld, where various discourses dealing with the same social phenomena, say artworks, compete to fill the phenomena with meaning. Above all, it is a system that both forms and is formed through language use. It denotes the kinds of discourses present in a text, and their 'ordering of dominance' (cf. Fairclough 1995:265; Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:98, 146-8). The order of dominance ties in with the notion of hegemony mentioned earlier, but dominance is not necessarily synonymous with hegemony, since hegemony implies dominance across several contexts, say several art exhibitions. To exemplify how one might identify a discursive order, here is a blurb from Sørlandets Kunstmuseum's (SKMU) 2011 program:

> In collaboration with the Finnish-Norwegian Cultural Institute, we are pleased this year to present contemporary art from Finland. The world renowned Eija-Liisa Ahtila will make her Norwegian debut at SKMU at the end of March. Her works have been shown at MoMA in New York as well as at Tate Modern in London. Ahtila's exhibition will be followed up with presentations of Marko Vuokola, Pilvi Takala and Sanna Kannisto. Don't miss out on these exciting exhibitions and events!

Sentence one in the excerpt mentions an international institute, which sets a scholarly tone. This is followed with the name-dropping of two famous institutions signifying prestige, which raises SKMU's prestige by association. The Finish names mean practically nothing to readers unfamiliar with the Finish art scene, but with the superlative 'world renowned' applied to Ahtila, and her connection to MoMA and Tate Modern, her high status is assumed. The other Fins gain status by being presented in SKMU, who gives itself status by associating with an artist who has a connection to MoMA and Tate Modern. The final sentence taps into a marketing discourse and the persuasive genre of a *directive* (Ravelli 2006:22), which deploys an imperative verb intended to influence reader behaviour: 'Don't miss out on these exciting events!' If exciting, more people than just those who regularly participate in Kristiansand's art scene may be likely to attend. More could be said about SKMU's blurb, but my point is to illustrate one possible way of identifying a discourse order: the status discourse is primary because the text operates on the assumption that artworld-internal criteria for status are

preconditions for having a product that is exciting to a wider audience. The status discourse extends *from* the artworld *to* the masses, and the marketing discourse is intended largely for the masses. Furthermore, the paragraph displays a subordinate branding discourse; it builds SKMU as a brand the reader can trust to provide exciting art experiences.

In the example, determining the discourse order entails categorizing the identified discourses according to that which is the most dominant. In the identification processes, it should be possible to notice whether there are conflicts between discourses. The SKMU example reveals no conflict since the prestige built within the artworld transfers into prestige in the eyes of visitors, on the basis of their trust in SKMU to provide them with exciting art experiences. After analysing the discourse order, it may come as no surprise that the author was not a curator but the museum director. But to conclude, the concept of a discourse order can be visualized with a weaving metaphor: a more minor marketing thread is woven into a dominant background of artworld status.

Interpretive frame. In Christopher Whitehead's (2012) study of museal texts, he uses the concept of an *interpretive frame* – a discursive practice that selects an emphasis, points out some things and obfuscates other things.[16] This concept is helpful for analysing museum texts. To explain interpretive frames, Whitehead quotes Robert Entman:

> *To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and / or treatment recommendation* for the item described. (Entman quoted in Whitehead 2012:54, original emphasis)

Mediational art museum texts contain the types of frames Entman theorizes, but so also do other symbolic languages such as lighting strategies, wall colours, bench placement and so forth. In some contexts, an interpretive frame could be conceived as a 'frame of reference' – the surroundings that help make the study object meaningful. Whitehead, in the same passage, also presents another frame definition that deepens what it means to select a frame:

[16] Whitehead draws on D.A. Snow et al. (1986) 'Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation'. *American Sociological Review*, 51, 464-81, which discusses Erving Goffman's understanding of frames as ' "schemata of interpretation" that enable individuals "to locate, perceive, identify and label" occurrences within their life space and the world at large' (Snow et al. 1986:464). Goffman's seminal work is from 1974: *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. London: Harper & Row. In a conversation with Whitehead, I asked him about his use of Fairclough's discourse analysis. He replied that he indeed drew on Fairclough (1995/2010), but clearly, his main focus is on interpretive frames.

> Frames are principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters. (Gitlin, quoted in Whitehead 2012:54)

This definition is less relevant for discourses in the texts I study, not least because -Isms are well-theorized and have main proponents. But Gitlin's conception could apply to smaller tools and how they are used (see toolbox, below). Entman's and Getlin's conceptions of interpretive frames are useful because as they can account for authors being framers; they choose, deliberately or not, to highlight some things at the expense of others, and, as any picture-framer will attest, a passepartout and frame help viewers notice some aspects more than others. Thus the interpretive frame concept is useful for analysing gallery texts because it acknowledges that linguistic devices and discourses help viewer-readers see some things while ignoring other things that might lead to alternative interpretations.

Whitehead uses many synonyms for the frame metaphor.[17] He does so, I suggest, to make his language less repetitive. But the repetition problem also arises with 'discourse', for if everything in every sentence falls under an interpretive frame or discourse, these words could end up in every other sentence I write in this paper.

A pertinent question is whether there is any crucial difference between the discourse concept I outline above, and Whitehead's interpretive frame concept. The discourse concept is potentially much wider than the interpretive frame concept because the purposes of gallery texts and the language used to talk about the social domain of gallery texts must necessarily be wider than one interpretive frame permits. On the other hand, when examining the notion of, say, the discourse on 'using an artist's biography to interpret a work', the distinction between a 'frame for interpretation' and an 'interpretation discourse' blurs. There are indeed passages in Whitehead (2012:46) which support blurring:

> For now, we can suggest that what constitutes historical art and what constitutes contemporary art is not a matter of chronology but literally a matter of interpretation, which is to suggest both that interpretive cues are built into it and that it is built into specific cultures of interpretation upon which it depends for its status.

[17] In Whitehead's (1012) parlance, 'tacit theorizing about what matters' (p. 70-71), 'a focus on pictorial, compositional, formal, technical and biographical aspects' (p. 73), 'theories of value' (p. 73), 'selective readings of art' (p. 81), 'interpretive resources', 'interpretive perspectives' (p. 87) and 'interpretive strategy' (p. 116) all could be understood to mean 'interpretive frame'.

Here I interpret 'interpretive cues' as pointing to the same phenomena indexed by Fairclough's notion of the internal relationships in a text, for instance the interrelation of parts of speech, which can represent micro-discourses. Whitehead's 'cultures of interpretation' I would partly equate with discourse orders in a given social context. Whitehead also speaks of 'complex interpretive programmes' (2012:69) in a way that could be interpreted as paralleling Fairclough's notion of a discourse order. When Whitehead, later in the same passage, mentions examples of interpretive frames – 'biographical frame, the technical-stylistic frame and the socio-economic frame' – he could, I argue, have just as easily used Faircloughian terminology to say: 'this discourse order consists of a biographical discourse, a technical-stylistic discourse and a socio-economic discourse'.

Hence, perhaps the main difference between Fairclough's (1995:358) definition of 'discourse' and Whitehead's 'interpretive frame' is the former's greater emphasis on what he hopes to identify through the research (e.g., social injustice), and latter's emphasis on selective seeing in the art context. Authors are choosers who tap into already-prepared discourses and frames (e.g., about the artist's biography, formal analysis), and they construct syntheses enabling viewer-readers to see some things as mattering more than others (Whitehead 2012:70-71). My analyses in Chapter 3, of the main discourses and interpretive frames in the Dahl A4, will further clarify the difference. But to conclude: interpretive frames are those things used to interpret the art, and they are couched within a wider field of 'talk' that is also angled in relation to a certain perspective.

The external relationships of discourses. Fairclough makes a point about the complex relationships discourses have with other social objects (1995:3; cf. pp. 131-137; Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:82). He admonishes me to explore the relationships between my chosen study object and these other social objects. While it is possible to interpret this in any number of directions, for instance to study the relation between my study object and economic structures, organizational reforms or government directives, and, not least, the art exhibitions' other components, I chose to interpret the relationships to other social objects as doing *comparative analysis of texts*. There are several reasons for this.

Firstly, it is smart because the scope of this paper does not allow me space to do close readings of all three cases – comparative analysis abbreviates the analytical process. Secondly, finding a discursive tool in one place sensitizes me to recognizing it down line. It enables me to notice things I might miss simply by doing close reading. It also reveals

remarkable absences. Here I think of Aby Warburg's comparative analyses of pictures; through setting up juxtapositions, he identified similarities and differences he would not have noticed otherwise.[18] Thirdly, comparative analysis allows me to ask questions that are important for my study: Do the Dahl study objects contain a discourse order that is repeated in the V&A's texts for works by Dahl's contemporaries? Do BKM's texts for a divergent sort of art perpetuate any discourse I find in the Dahl texts, thus strengthening that discourse, even to the point where it has hegemony across the categories of time, place and type of art exhibition? Or do the comparative study objects contain different discourses, perhaps ones signalling that the discourse order in the Dahl texts are becoming obsolete?

The compared social objects are thus relevant resonance chambers for my main study objects. Jørgensen and Phillips (1999:98) point out yet another benefit of analysing external relationships: this can help me see how the discourses and ideologies (bodies of doctrine, beliefs guiding the institution) are maintained, entrenched, reshaped, and in turn, how they reshape institutional structures, whether ideological, technologically motivated or introduced by political or administerial directives.[19] But in saying this, I am not necessarily out to expose some unfairness; my comparative analyses are an aid to analysing discursive formations (texts), to see what they can reveal above and beyond immediate art interpretation.

In sum, 'discourse', 'discursive practice', 'discourse order', 'interpretive frames' and 'external relationships of discourses' are important concepts for my analysis of the mediational texts in art museums. Throughout this sub-section devoted to definitions, I have broached certain philosophical and theoretical assumptions, yet without directly addressing them. In the next sub-section, therefore, I present what I see as the main *post-structuralist* assumptions that have implications for my analytical methods.

Starting theoretical assumptions for analysing art museum texts

Some of the six assumptions I now present, I have already intimated in the foregoing section. Now I clarify them. An important discussion amongst discourse analysts and linguists is whether reality *per se* is linguistically constructed, or whether there is a reality independent of language. I assume, with thinkers such as Immanuel Kant (1790/1987:28), Fairclough (1995:4) and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999), that *(1) there is indeed a natural*

[18] http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/warburga.htm [4 March 2013]

[19] To exemplify; an ideological structure could be BKM's education department, which was established at the same time as *Den Kulturelle Skolesekken* (the Cultural Backpack). Technological structures could be the Internet pages and the smartphone app installed in the Nikolai Astrup gallery (2011). BKM is now implementing a similar tool in other galleries. As for political directives, BKM, as a tax-payer funded institution, complies with government directives.

reality out there but that I cognize it not as it is in itself, but through my categories of language and experience. This relates to the question broached earlier, of whether discourses construe the entirety of a social world. To put it baldly; I am locked inside language and it is impossible for me to know with certainty all the components of my social reality. What I mostly have access to is a social reality constructed through language. I question whether I, as a language user, have cognitive access to the natural world, so I am sceptical about the possibility of knowing whether there is anything non-discursive which helps constitute the social world to which I have access. I access a social world – say the artworld – through embodied retinal experiences and back pain, but both are conditioned by language. Tacit knowledge, say of judging simultaneous colour contrasts, is perhaps the closest I come to direct knowledge of the natural world, but the fact of having that tacit knowledge implies that I am already enmeshed in a social world. This does not mean that my experiences (cognitive, emotional) are unreal; they are real because they are efficacious (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:117), but my reality is mediated by my embodied experience and language. Symbolic language is the means I use to engage with reality, and it manipulates natural reality and creates social worlds. It is what enables me to find art meaningful. Fairclough (1995:4) asserts that 'the natural and social worlds differ in that the latter depends on human action for its existence and is socially constructed'. While I intellectually agree with Fairclough, it makes pragmatic sense to operate on Laclau and Mouffet's assumption that discourses function as the sole building-blocks of social reality (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:15).

Given that my social reality is largely but probably not solely language-based, what I understand and can talk about in the artworld is cultural and historical, changing through time. Language instability is one of the prime motors for historical change. Consequently, a second assumption is that *(2) none of the statements about things in a socially constructed world – in particular, paintings in art museums – are essential. A work label's contents are contingent and could have been otherwise* (cf. Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:31). Further, if an artwork is a social phenomenon constructed through discourse, then *(3) the artwork's meaning can never be definitively given.* It will always be possible to say something more and something different. Through analysing art museum texts, it may be possible to see this contingent, social constructedness more clearly, to grasp the strangeness of the discourses which have achieved hegemony, to imagine how they could change.

A fourth assumption follows on the heels of contingency: *(4) there is a fundamental distinction between the theoretical principle of contingency and how it comes to practical expression. The presupposition of contingency does not imply that whatever is said about an*

artwork is completely relative. The categories for what people perceive as relevant to say or think about artworks are fairly stable, sometimes slow to change. I think of how, since the Renaissance and Alberti's *De picture* (1435), it has been standard to mention the artist's name. Thus the form and contents of gallery texts are not totally up for grabs at all times. Certain conventions have arisen through the centuries and have proven so practical that they would be difficult to do without. Tombstone labels, which contain categorizing information such as artist's name, lifespan, title, size, materials, donor and catalogue number are like bookshelves. Without them, books would be stacked helter-skelter and it would be difficult to find what one was looking for or remember where anything is. That is why this information is called 'basic'. Tombstone labels contain the most hegemonic discourses on which museum practitioners depend. Due to the hegemonic consequence of tombstone labels, I chose not to research them. It is more interesting to me to scrutinize texts that more easily reflect contingency and thus the competition between discourses and their concomitant interpretive frames and modes of presentation, all of which affect the art's interpretation.

This leads into a fifth assumption: *(5) because discourses, interpretive frames, presentational modes and the like are contingent, they are prone to compete with each other.* Discourses emerge through writing and discussing (social interaction). They can be maintained, entrenched, attain hegemony, cooperate with one another, conflict with one another and be dismantled or superseded. One of the goals of discourse analysis, according to Laclau and Moffe (1985), is to map the process whereby battles are waged over what the signs – here artworks – should mean and how they should be valued.

Finally, *(6) an artwork's constitutive parts do not determine the interpretive label's contents.* There is nothing in the work itself to compel a certain interpretation. To briefly explain, I follow Søren Kierkegaard (1963, vol 9., p. 32) in holding that facts in themselves do not trigger action, and no evidence can force a subject to make a decision. Drawing on Solveig Reindalen (2012), I conjecture that decisions about what to include in interpretive texts have more to do with the writer's *Bildung*, here understood as an author's sense of responsibility as a bearer of knowledge, to write in a way that accords with his or her knowledge, worldview, acculturation and the exigencies of the particular writing situation – in a word, prudence. On this view, writing interpretive gallery texts cannot be a neutral activity for it involves an ethical imperative that exceeds museum policies and directives. Why this is so is because writing is a normative practice.

This brief presentation of literature and the discussion of definitions and starting assumptions serve as a theoretical background for my research methods. The literature is further elucidated in Part II.

PART II: RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCESS

Three phases

My research process can be conceived as consisting of three phases. As for Phase I; I visited BKM and picked up copies of the Dahl texts (the introductory wall text and the A4 hand-out) in 2001 (I had first read them eleven years earlier, in 2003, the year I translate them). I started the first analytical phase by reading the texts while standing in the gallery in front of the works. Since then I've largely been at a desk in Oslo, but have visited BKM several times throughout the research period. I started analysing the texts intuitively and ad hoc, reading and re-reading, identifying meaning-making devices, noting verbs, interpretive frames, discourses and so forth, then gaining greater clarity while reading Jørgensen & Phillips, Stippe, Engebretsen, Johansen, Whitehead, Trench, Serrell and Ravelli, among others. My mind constantly turned to the Dahl texts and how they use the elements in the toolbox I was constructing during the reading process.

Interviews overlap my first and second analytical phases but serve only to supplement text analysis. I do not use interviews as primary data sources, and nothing said in them was confidential. In March 2012, I interviewed four BKM authors (curators and educators), asking them how they went about deciding what to include in the gallery texts, their views on interpretive technologies, metaphors, what interpretive frames they thought were important in relation to Dahl, and whether the A4 functioned according to its intended purpose. I informally quizzed three museum guards about whom it is that picks up the A4, and, when it seemed appropriate, asked visitors who were walking around with the A4 what they thought about it in relation to the artworks (I also asked visitors about this in 2011. The non-group visitors I encountered were all international tourists.) A final set of informants consisted of two Norwegian school teachers, one working for many years in an *ungdomskole* (O Level), the other at a *videregåendeskole* (A Level) with a curriculum tailored for pupils intending to study humanistic subjects at university. The latter takes school classes to BKM annually. Both gave me their take on the level of language and implied reader. This was important because the museum guards said pupils as much as adults pick up the A4s.

To give an overview of Phase II: While doing a close reading of the Dahl texts, my analytical approach was relatively general – it could have been applied to almost any sort of text, yet in the process, I identified tools that could become the basis for a more calibrated analysis. Shifting to a comparative analytical method in Phase II is thus not a random choice since it builds on a more general method of close reading. To reiterate, the 'other' social objects are 1) BKM's webpage on the Dahl exhibition and the page devoted to Lysverket in BKM's 2012program; 2) the V&A's paintings galleries primary-level wall text; 3) the secondary-level wall text for gallery room 87 entitled *Turner-Constable and the Exhibitionary Landscape*; 4) the individual interpretive labels for the same gallery; 5) BKM's *Babel* exhibition wall text; and 6) interpretive labels. I visited the V&A in the fall of 2011 and while there, a floor supervisor functioned as a liaison between myself and the text author (a curator).

I asked: Can the devices I find in the Dahl texts also be found in these other texts? To answer this I identified and comparatively analysed the devices used in the V&A and Babel texts, and while inquiring into points of similarity and repeated usage, I also noted salient differences between the devices used in the three cases.

Phase III is largely intermixed with the first and second, so perhaps it should be understood more as a 'level' rather than a phase. I reflected over and wrote discussively about the findings and meanings which emerged in Phases I and II. Due to space constraints, these so-called level-three reflections and discussions appear intermixed with the first two phases, but the more distanced analyses were done after writing Chapters 3 and 4.

Toolbox for analysing gallery texts

Making an overview of devices for analysing gallery texts is like filling a toolbox. I cannot put all the tools in the world in the box, but some of the are really versatile and useful, others have a more limited use. There may be tools which are not in the box, and if I knew about them, they could change the course of my findings. The delimiting criteria for what to put in the box are that I only include tools I suspect will be useful and which I have already found evidence of while reading theoretical literature and gallery texts from various museums. All the tools are 'power tools'; by virtue of existing in a text in a certain order, they wield power and generate meaning above and beyond interpreting the art.

Each tool is a device used in text writing, but it also represents a question I ask about the study object: 'Are there any major metaphors here?'; 'Are there instances of authorless authority?' and so forth. In elucidating the tools, I assume that by giving artworld examples of

how the contents of the toolbox can be used, I show that I am not just regurgitating someone else's theorizing but am thinking about how the tools apply specifically to my project.

Tabel 1: Toolbox

1. Parts of speech Prepositions? Adjectives (superlatives?) Verbs: active or passive? Pronouns?	**6. Level of language** Elementary? Early intermediate? Upper intermediate? High proficiency?	**9. Conflicts** Word co-location? Word connotations? Floating signifiers? Rifts in intention? Conflicts btw. discourses?
2. Master concepts Nominalizations? -Isms? Metaphors? Myths? Traditional stories?	**7. Implied reader** University educated? Art historian? Non-specialist? Foreign tourist? Child?	**10. Discourses & interpretive frames** Art history or artworld internal? Artist's biography, intentions, practice, method, materials? Group identity? Status? Influence, inspiration? Marketing? Formal qualities? Social history?
3. Kinds of sentences / clauses Passive, declarative, questions, imperative…?	**8. Authority** Fact based statements? Subjective feeling? Vague statements? Modality (high/low affinity statements)? Quoting? Does the writer/author have more authority than the artist? Name dropping? Fancy foreign phrases? Repetition? Intertextual borrowing? Devious gap filling? Authorless authority?	**11. Excluded / discourses & frames** Provenance? Cost? Stolen? Visitor's contributions?
4. Transitivity How is info organized and how does this affect meaning? What are the meaning-making patterns?		**12. Interactivity** Does the text ask, invite or tell the reader to do anything in particular?
5. Text genre Narrative? Report? Explanation? Exposition? Instruction?		**13. Reader's immediate context** Does the text relate directly to what visitors see? (e.g., through formal analysis)?

1. Parts of speech. *Prepositions* might reveal a writer's theoretical and philosophical commitments. 'Under' might for instance indicate a structuralist assumption about there being a fixed meaning undergirding a phenomenon. *Adjectives* are evaluative words; they might reveal who the target readers are as well as indicate the type of discourse. Superlative adjectival phrases such as 'world-famous works' and 'the most complete display of Leonardo's rare paintings ever held' (National Gallery London, November 2011 program) imply that target readers are the masses of non-art specialists and that a marketing discourse is being used, whereas in a different blurb on the same page, the adjectival phrase 'The Walpole Society's centenary', which modifies the subject 'edition', seems more obscure and geared towards a narrower category of readers. Adjectives can also indicate artistic genres and -Isms. When writing about nature, for instance, adjectives suggesting drama might imply Romanticism.

Verbs could tell tales of a writer's will to exert authority over readers. When a verbal phrase is passive and the agent of action is only implied, as in 'the elements are combined into

an idealized whole', the artwork seems to have composed itself or sprung from nature rather than being created by a person. Phrased as nature's product, readers are more prone to accept without question the author's claim that the artwork is an idealized complete whole, even if it is a conflicting collage. Inert *nominalizations* of verbs and adjectives also often lead to impersonal and seemingly authoritative statements. Perhaps this is because they are denser, more abstract, and they neutralize action. Compare 'The *loss* of paint was the result of the icon panel's expans*ion* and contrac*tion*' with 'The icon *lost* paint because its wood panel *expanded* and *contracted'*: option one sounds erudite due to the 'of' phrase and the -tion words, whereas option two has relatively less weight at its tail, it is phrased more prosaically and sounds far less like a pronouncement from on high. Passive phrasing can imply a distinction between the individual writer, his or her personal opinions, and the institution commissioning the act of writing (cf. Engebretsen 2007:39).

Pronouns, like impersonal phrasings, concern agency. When a text avoids all pronouns, an impersonal tone emerges and distance is created between the writer and reader (as in this sentence). The assertion may appear, again, almost like a natural phenomenon since no agent seems responsible for it. Whitehead (2012:175) calls this 'authorless authority'. Not mentioning an agent reinforces the sense of a prestigious institution versus a lowly reader. On the other hand, if a text says 'We see that …' or 'You can see…' the distance between writer and reader narrows and the reader is inclined to become more engaged in the activity of seeing (cf. Ravelli 2006:14). A feeling of affinity with the writer emerges and readers may be cajoled into thinking they see something when they actually do not. So pronouns, like verbs, can affect readers' criticality and level of engagement in the communicative activity.

2. Master concepts are 'privileged signs' in a network of signs that do the crucial work of organizing discourses (Laclau & Mouffe 1985:112, cited in Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:19, 37, 39). Jørgensen and Phillips speak (p. 19) of how subjects gain identity through being in relationships with other subjects. This is the case for concepts. I think of a relational network of concepts being like knots in a fishnet. Some knots are stronger than others and have many threads tying into them. They would be the master concepts. For example, in a national discourse, 'nation' will be privileged and into it would tie concepts such as 'folk', 'people', 'landscape', place names and nouns suggesting collective identity, collective culture, nationhood and political independence. From a post-structuralist perspective, the knots are impermanent; over time, 'landscape', as suggesting collective culture, may unravel and some

other concept might become a large knot in the national discourse, for instance 'passport'.[20] The concept-threads that tie into the master concept are important because without them, the master concept would mean practically nothing. Perhaps the most important socially-constructed master signifier in an art-museological context is 'artwork'. This imbues phenomena – even juvenilia and preliminary sketches – with art-identity and status. 'Artist' is also a master signifier since it organizes the identity of the one creating the phenomena. The gallery text as a whole reinforces this identity, bending it in relation to the discourses the text ties into, for instance the artist-genius discourse.

Another major category of master concepts is *-Isms.* These can point to art-historical epochs or to philosophical or theoretical directions. Either way, they indicate a heavily theorized body of knowledge and main proponents for that knowledge, factors often rendering them authoritative interpretive devices.

Metaphors can be master concepts. I draw on George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980:5) in understanding metaphor as the practice of 'understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another'. Analogous to how some knots in the aforementioned network are bigger than others, so also are some metaphors more controlling than others. They may function as leitmotifs and recur throughout a museum's texting practices, determining the trajectory of visitors' experience. It is impossible to think without metaphors, so because they are ubiquitous, they tend to work more covertly.

Myths and *Traditional stories* can stem from the standard bodies of mythology, the Bible, fairytales, folk tales and other stories passed down through history. The mythic or traditional protagonist can function as a type upon which to base an artist's identity. His or her life can be interpreted as patterned on that of the heroic protagonist.

3, 4 & 5. ***Types of clauses and sentences, transitivity and text genres.*** I move now from the parts of speech and master concepts to the level of clauses and sentences. Transitive analysis reveals how these are organized into statements about subjects and objects. I look at the kinds of clauses in the study objects: are they passive, declarative, questioning, imperative? Answering this can help me identify the *text genres*. A text genre has a distinct purpose,

[20] I found an example of the impermanence of the relational network of concepts in the exhibition *Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven* at Oslo's National Gallery (spring 2012). When the featured artists were painting in the early twentieth century, their works were used in a national discourse, to establish Canadian identity as distinct from British and American identity. The Canadian landscape was paramount, and people, especially Native Americans, were not depicted in paintings. Now, however, Canadian identity, understood as including 'First Nations', could be evidenced in the guided tour of the exhibition, even though no people were pictured. 'First Nations' is also included in exhibitionary practices at the Art Gallery of Ontario, for discussions of artworks containing no visible reference to such people (Whitehead 2012:122-126).

structural pattern and tone of voice (Ravelli 2006: 19-30). Its modes of organization – patterns – make it useful for conveying a certain type of information. 'The key to understanding genre', says Ravelli, is to 'understand that it focuses on meaning – overall purpose and direction' (Ravelli 2006:29). Text genres I have found thus far in art museum gallery texts are the story/narrative, report, exposition (also called news/journalistic style), interview, discussion, explanation, directive and the devotional or moralizing sermon. To give one example; if a gallery text uses only present tense state-of-being 'is' or 'has', it is probably a report describing the artist or artwork, to provide classification (cf. Ravelli 2006:20). I say more about text genres in the proceeding chapters, but the point here is simply to introduce them and state that Ravelli, Jørgensen and Phillips admonish me to catalogue the text genres in my study objects; this will help me understand how they are structured, how they make meaning, the roles they give the reader, and some of their ideological implications.

6 & 7. *A*nalysing the ***level of language*** and the ***implied reader*** entails determining whether the gallery text is meant for a 'basic language user', an 'independent user' or a 'proficient user'. I draw on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) guidelines, which outline 'achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe'.[21] Table 2 is based on the Wikipedia table but is modified to apply to my research situation, which does not involve the language user needing to write or speak.

Table 2: Language levels

A: Basic user		**B: Independent user**		**C: Proficient user**	
A1: Beginner	**A2: Elementary**	**B1: Early intermediate**	**B2: Upper intermediate**	**C1: High proficiency**	**C2: Mastery**
Can understand very basic phrases for satisfying concrete needs.	Can understand sentences and often used expressions related to areas of immediate relevance (e.g., local geography), and simple, routine info.	Can understand the main points of clear, standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered.	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on concrete and abstract topics, plus technical discussions in one own field.	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning.	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read.

In the toolbox, what I call *everyday language* would relate to columns A2 and B1, and *art historical* vocabulary would relate to C1, but also B2, since concepts such as 'genre' and 'hierarchy' would probably be intermediate-level concepts and not restricted to the discipline of art history. The compound concept 'genre hierarchy' would be in C1. When a writer draws on a specialized art history vocabulary, this suggests the implied readers are art historians,

[21] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_European_Framework_of_Reference_for_Languages [13 Jan. 2013]

colleagues, or at least university students. Everyday vocabulary may mean the implied readers at the early intermediate level and have little background knowledge about the phenomena they experience in the museum. It may indicate a populist discourse. Alternatively, it may mean the writer is simply trying to put the hay where the horses can get at it, to avoid pomposity and draw all attention to the theme, not side-track readers into remarking over inscrutable nomenclature. Even C1 and C2 readers will appreciate this. But the language in gallery texts will always exclude or put off someone, and by examining the language level, it may be possible to find out who this is.

8. Authority in mediational texts is theorized by Richard Bauman (2004:128-158). His ideas about how authority is relayed from an authoritarian source (say a Fijian chieftain or a medieval Irish poet), through a mediator (the chief's official spokesman or the poet's bard) and to a receiver, are relevant for my project, not least because an artist, even when practicing appropriation and intertextuality (see below), is a source and thus an authority for the writer's mediation of the artwork. As such, one might assume the artist is the authoritative agent more than the gallery text writer. But Bauman's examples of official spokesman or poet's bard are not perfectly comparable to the context of my research, and for at least two reasons. First, a museum writer writes primarily on behalf of the art museum, the exhibitionary context (e.g., in relation to a theme) and the art – yet with respect for the artist. Secondly, the notion of 'one text writer' for a text on a museum wall is misleading, since such texts are usually the result of a round-robin editing process involving contributions from educators, curators, directors, translators and marketing and design personnel.[22] This multiplicity is also stressed by Engebretsen (2007:19) when he discusses the 'voice speaking in a text, and the gaze through which we see events, persons and situations'; he recognizes that the 'author' may not be one specific individual. So also for my context: *the author* should be understood as a synthesis of contributions, some possibly conflicting (I discuss conflict below), even though one person may have written a first draft and subsequently coordinated the proposed changes.

Bauman (2004:157) explains how a writer's own voice can mix with that of authoritative agent (persons and/or institutions). When this happens, an 'intertextual gap' opens and the writer becomes an authoritative agent, thus an author. The author can be conceived as a messenger and a museum visitor a message receiver.[23] The two are usually not in a face-to-

[22] I thank Tove Haugsbø for her discussion on these two points.
[23] There are of course other ways of conceiving the relation between authoritative agents. One is to see receivers as author-authorities insofar as they include their own lifeworld experiences and knowledge (horizon of

face relationship, and between them is the interpretive text (cf. Bauman 2004:129). The distance which emerges here is a device for increasing the authoritative agent/author's authority over the receiver. The distance *per se* has efficacy in this respect, but another reason why the authority increases is because the mediator is schooled in devices that can embellish the utterance (e.g., of the artist or museum) and make it seem more prestigious than it would otherwise. Bauman calls this 'analytical relay'. It is, he says on p. 153, the professional mediator's 'prerogative to embellish, enhance, paraphrase, elaborate, reinforce' the authoritative utterance. But while it is the mediator's choice to point out some aspects at the expense of others, the more circumspect mediator will at least try to convey the source authoritative utterance's 'logical focus' (p. 153), which in some cases would be comparable to the artist's intentions for how he or she wants a work to be received. This is a thorny issue, as shall soon be revealed.

With the foregoing as an introduction to the toolbox's 'authority' section, what are some of the tools for increasing the authority – of the artist, the artwork, the museum and the text writer, who, as I have argued, is also an author? For starters, an author can include *fact-based statements* (e.g., CV-related) about the artist or the artwork that are defensible because they can be checked. Scientific rigour and information relevant to interpretation also come across as trustworthy, justifiable and thus authoritative. If a text is largely hearsay or mentions the receiver's *subjective feelings* when encountering the works, these statements cannot be verified and the linkage (concatenation) between artist, utterance (the artwork) and receiver is broken. Another example of broken linkage is *vague statements*. These often arise in relation to traveling exhibitions, since one must write about works as yet unseen, but the texts need to be printed in advance of works arriving in the gallery. This requires readers themselves to exert more authority in making meaning.

When a statement comes across as authoritative and trustworthy, this is a mechanism for exerting power, but not necessarily in a negative sense. Readers find it legitimate to be dominated by an author, asserts Bauman, and he draws on Mikhail Bakhtin to explain why this is: the reader has an already-established belief in the 'sanctity of tradition'; whatever is closely connected with the past is felt to be 'hierarchically higher' (Bauman 2004:150ff).

Modality also affects authority. It concerns the degree of the writer's affinity with what he or she is saying. Modality denotes the difference between 'X is Y' (high affinity) or 'X

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understanding) in the process of making artworks meaningful. Artworks would thus be like partly empty containers or cyphers, and receivers fill them with meaning. The meaning a receiver gives a work is authoritative, but only for that individual receiver. She is however welcome to try to persuade others to treat her meaning as authoritative (cf. Alice and Humpty Dumpty in Carroll 1872/1994:274).

could mean Y'. Hedging words (could, perhaps, seem, might) denote low affinity. 'Munch's *Madonna* may give the impression of being…' is less authoritative and lower in affinity than 'Munch's *Madonna* symbolizes…' because the former demonstrates the author's subjective impression, whereas the latter will be followed by a normative claim. Nevertheless, if there is a gap between the viewer/reader's impression and the author's strong-affinity claim, the author's authority may be neutralized or undermined (Engebretsen 2007:92). An example of this, on my view, is Edvard Munch's repeated efforts, in his journals, to put women in three rough categories. Take his claim about *Woman in Three Stages* (1894): 'It is the dreaming woman, the life-lusting woman, and the woman as a nun'.[24] If I, as viewer, do not see the three figures in this way, Munch is not around to set me aright. Monroe Beardsley's (1958/1981:17-21) criticism of basing interpretation on an artist's intentions now comes to the fore. So also does Roland Barthe's (1977:148) claim of 'the author's death': 'no "person" says it: its source, its voice, is not the true place of the writing, which is reading…the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author'. Keeping Beardsley's and Barthe's views in mind, it seems to me that, nevertheless, the author is not completely dead, for I find that the rhetorical power of the tools in my box can resuscitate the author. *Quoting an artist,* say a statement about his or her expressed intentions, can bring about resuscitation in the mind of the reader. But in defence of low-affinity statements; the artworld has a long tradition of writing texts honed on subjective, low-affinity feelings. These may be the only legitimate type of evaluative remarks one can make about ambiguous art. The statements, if one extrapolates from Kant, cannot be argued over because it is one person's subjective claim pitted against another's. All we can do is hope for Kant's *sensus communis.*

Assuming, then, that the author-artist's voice is still viable, quoting the artist can be a tool for asserting authority in the text – for example, to quote Andy Warhol: 'The reason I'm painting this way is that I want to be a machine' (Warhol 1963:730-733). But especially in the context of artists who are young or fairly obscure, well-known mediators who are art historians, critics and philosophers tend to have far more authority. The practice of including such authoritative voices in a mediational text points to a system of ranking in the artworld: analogous to the English aristocracy, everyone could be said to have a number. In some cases the artist's number is higher than the mediator's, in other cases not. When writing mediational

[24] '*Det er den drømmende kvinde, den livslystne kvinde, og kvinden som nonne'*. Edvard Munch, (1929) *Livsfrisens Tilblivelse,* p. 14. Munch made this comment to Henrik Ibsen. A related quote: '…The three women – one of them dressed in white, Irene, dreaming of the life that lies ahead – then the naked one, Maya, full of *joie de vivre* – then the mournful woman with her fixed, pale expression, standing amongst the tree-trunks…' Ulrich Bischoff (2000) *Munch.* Bonn: Taschen, p. 47.

texts, authors can award themselves authority merely by quoting famous thinkers. *Name dropping* is a related but simplistic tool, as can be seen in the last sentences of the last paragraph. This could also be called 'vampirism' because it draws on someone's fame merely to nourish the status of the name dropper. The last paragraph's final sentence also used another simplistic tool: unexplained foreign phrases.[25] The writer may not know what he or she is talking about, but the Latin lends a specious halo of erudition!

To entrench authority, the tool of *repetition* is crucial. According to Jørgensen and Phillips (1999:31), the social consequence of repeatedly deploying a discourse is that it is reinforced and seems more natural. In my analysis, I try to pay attention to whether devices are repeated from text to text; if something shows up in all the media, this may imply a hegemonic discourse.

A realization I share with Whitehead, among others, is that writing is a matter of *intertextual borrowing*. Nothing said is probably original in itself; the originality lies only in the new synthesis. Hence I ask: 'How did the writer come up with the statement?' From where are the ideas borrowed? Barthes (1977:146) speaks eloquently on intertextuality:

> We know now a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture…the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them.

Intertextuality is everywhere and not problematic in itself, but it does seem problematic to create a label by cutting and pasting from the first Google hit on an artist's name. In my project, I am interested in detecting intertextual references that function as 'punch lines' or keys to meaning. Following Whitehead, I want to detect how borrowings can be allusions to the afore-mentioned traditional stories and myths, but also to other ideas external to a work's more implicit contents (Whitehead 2012:166). An example can be drawn from a text on Håkon Bleken's *Over and Out II* (1977): 'The painting belongs to a series Bleken created on the theme of his parent's aging and death. Old age is not considered a resource in our modern society, but rather almost as a disease. It is a sick man, still standing relatively erect, that

[25] Put baldly, s*ensus communis* means everyone might not agree about a judgement of taste, but they ought to agree (Kant 1790/1987:87-90).

stares helplessly at us. His time has run out…' (Anspach et al. 2008:156). The allusion to *memento mori* (remember you must die) is not mentioned in this text but it is hard to miss. As Whitehead explains, the borrowed notion becomes a key for opening the work's meaning, yet 'while the voice of the artist is not invoked, there is a clear sense that the interpretation is speaking with him, and that a complex process of negotiation and approval between the artist and interpreter has taken place' (Whitehead 2012:166).

A text's authority is related to its ability to *wield power* over readers. I have already mentioned that some instances of power-wielding are legitimate. Other times it may be less legitimate, as when using *authorless authority* or *cajoling pronouns* (see above). *Gap-filling* (Fairclough 1989:85, cited in Stibbe 2003) is another of the more devious devices in this respect. When a presupposition is not specifically given, readers supply it themselves, usually by drawing on cultural hearsay or common beliefs. For example: 'The works touch us in a variety of ways; some of them show a devil-may-care feminist attitude, while others appeal purely to our senses' (Oslo's Nasjonalmuseet 2010 program, p. 16). This sentence prompts readers to themselves supply the notion that having a feminist attitude is a reckless thing to have. Gap-filling, as Stibbe (2003) explains, forces readers to supply a presupposition in order to interpret the sentence. When a presupposition is hidden, it cannot be directly questioned and thus has the opportunity to become further entrenched.[26]

In sum, probing the mediator's authority can help me better grasp how the mediator – be it the art institution or the author – mediates itself. Here I am mindful of Marshal McLuhan's famous adage 'the medium is the message / massage'.

9. *Conflicts.* I have stressed that all the tools have power or force. Sometimes these forces conflict with each other. One category of conflict concerns practical aspects of writing, and a second category is more related to institutional structures. For the first category, conflicts can arise through *word co-location.* I can inquire into the role this plays in making meaning. Do, for instance, the master signifiers follow in rapid succession, or are there reflective spaces around them, such that readers can 'chew' one master signifier before biting into another? What about *word connotations*; do they conflict with or support the text's intentions? In an extract from a description of the right apse wall of San Vitale in Ravenna, one can read that 'On the inferior hem of the garment there is an embroidery with another offer: the arrival of the three kings with gifts for Jesus.' (Bendazzi & Ricci 1993). While it is indeed the case that

[26] A different kind of gap-filling is dangling adjectives. These may simply lead to confusion. Consider 'the modern'. What does this imply? An ideology? A condition? Baudelaire? Positivism? An epoch?

one of the meanings of ‘inferior’ is ‘to be lower in position’ the word suggests a substandard quality – but why would a king’s garment have substandard décor? Furthermore, ‘offer’ connects with ‘inferior’ and leads one to think about ‘victim’ or ‘sacrifice’ rather than ‘gift’.

Floating signifiers can trigger conflict because readers do not necessarily understand the proper context for interpreting them. As Engebretsen (2007:19) stresses, all words have histories and are culturally loaded with meaning. A battle is being waged to determine what they should mean. Take ‘icon’: in Byzantine art, this is a sacred picture a supplicant prays in front of, and the spirit of the saint is present in the image, praying to God on behalf of the supplicant. In Pop Art, ‘icon’ may denote a picture of someone who died tragically in the prime of life, but whose memory lives on. Returning to *Tom Tomson and the Group of Seven*, I was told on the guided tour that Thomson’s painting *The Jack Pine* (1916-17) became a ‘national icon’ – meaning, I guess, that it became a symbol of national identity – but also that when Tomson died, he too became an icon, which, I think, means he influenced many artists. So within the art context, there are at least four meanings of ‘icon’.

Another question for probing possible conflicts is: Are there *rifts in intention*? To understand some concepts, one needs a fair amount of background knowledge. A reader’s lack in this respect will cancel out the text’s original intention of providing information and interpretation. A close reading can reveal a conflict in communication: the texts convey other images than those they were meant to convey (cf. Engebretsen 2007:20).

As regards the second category of conflict – that which emanates from institutional structures – I assimilate Engebretsen’s point that the writing act takes place under various restraints and in relation to an array of demands. Museum superiors give text producers directives for their work routines and how their workday is organized. In conversations with text-producing museum educators, it became clear that their workday is filled with school groups to the point where they have little time for research. But there are also demands from curators, PR people, donors and the general public. Colleagues from different departments have different educations and interests, all of which lead to them giving divergent responses in the round-robin process of proofreading and editing texts. An example of conflict from such a process would be an editor’s demand to keep a text short, a marketer’s demand to promote the museum’s status, an educator’s demand for accessible ideas and language, and a curator’s demand for scholarship. The result – the text in the gallery space – will thus reflect negotiation between all those involved in the round-robin process. Accordingly, museum authors are mindful of many concerns when writing; they adopt roles and speak with voices

that do not necessarily coincide with their own. They may be required to present, and thus perpetuate, points of view with which they personally disagree (cf. Engebretsen 2007:30).

10. Hegemonic discourses* and *interpretive frames. Discourses and interpretive frames give readers the most important instructions on how to view, understand and appreciate the social phenomena, here understood as artworks in museums (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:55). Using a hiking metaphor, hegemonic discourses and interpretive frames are the main paths to interpretation. In texts such as those I study – and here I speak in general, based on my own experience – the 'trail head' is often the artist discourse, through frames such as *cv, artistic practice, methods, materials, technical processes* and the *categorization of works according to genre.* This is especially so in texts about living artists, and I surmise it is because these frames and discourses are usually 'safe'; the author can say something factual, which supplies science-based rigour, and they can avoid overtly evaluative or critical statements. After all, art museum text producers are not critics; they work on the 'same side as the artist', analogous to the Fijian chieftain's spokesman. Furthermore, drawing on such frames may open a path to interpretation yet not close off other possibilities. This harmonises with the intentions of artists who want their works to remain indeterminate signs.

Another possibly hegemonic frame is *group identity*. This could be expressed in terms of school affiliations, artistic movements or artistic genres. When an artist is subsumed under a group identity, this reduces the possibilities of identity and increases memorability. Group identities are like bookshelves: without them, the identities of artists would be chaotic. An example is Astrup Fearnley Museum's Internet blurb on Dan Colen: 'Dan Colen belongs to New York's "Bowery School", which also includes Nate Lowman, Terence Koh and Ryan McGinley.'[27] Reading this, I think of a sleazy neighbourhood with litter, tagging, alcoholics, drug pushers and prostitutes curbside. Because the image is so visual, it is easy to remember Dan Colen and the Bowery School.

Status, identity, influence and *inspiration.* It is impossible to disentangle the identity and status of a subject because these things rely on a network of relations (cf. Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:18). If the status discourse is present, some master signifiers might be 'international', 'most important', 'a main proponent', 'unique', 'well-known', and for older artists, 'nestor'. Legions of art museum texts use phrases like: 'So-and-so is one of the most important artists in Europe today'. Influence and inspiration also could be hegemonic frames. Traditional art

[27] http://www.onionmag.no/blogg/2011/01/15/peanuts-pa-astrup-fearnley-museet/ accessed 7 April 2012.

history is structured such that each new artist must be able to trace his or her artistic lineage to tradition and authoritative precursors.[28] Andy Warhol and Jackson Pollock are two major authorities for contemporary artists, but there are of course many, and artistic movements are also used as authoritative references. These are cited in museum texts almost analogously to how one would cite a reference in an academic text. An artist may most of all be influenced by parents and friends, but unless these people are artists, they will seldom be mentioned as influences in an interpretive text.

11. Excluded discourses. Jørgensen and Phillips (1999:50) admonish me to notice the discourses that glimmer with their absence. The exclusions may indicate that the tide has turned and frames or discourses formerly enjoying hegemony are now deemed irrelevant. There are always social consequences to the discourses that are included or excluded; they may for instance indicate an entrenched structure in the museum. I have never come across an interpretive label that included the price paid for a work. This information is more likely to be published in a museum's annual report. Usually the *provenance* of older works is only mentioned in its last stage, even though the work may have had multiple owners or been stolen by Nazis. I have seldom found *visitor contributions* to interpretive texts. This last instance points to reader involvement, a theme Whitehead (2012:175) discusses. Interpretation, he asserts, needs to be inclusive: 'not inclusive of everybody, for this is unfeasible, but attentive to the needs of diverse audiences including non-specialist ones'.

12. Interactivity denotes reader involvement. An example of this would be to use imperative verbs to tell readers to imagine something. Another example would be to ask visitors to post their own labels on the museum's website, and the museum could then make a selection. At the museum for applied art in Stockholm, school classes wrote interpretive texts for one exhibition room I visited in 2012. Some of the children wrote in Urdu, Vietnamese and Tamil.

13. The visitor's immediate context is the final tool. Does the text relate directly to what the visitor sees? This question pertains to a logic of order:

[28] Examiners for MA students at Oslo National Academy of the Arts, Department of Visual Arts, when assessing student projects, insist that students' 'documentation should include reflection over one's process and the way in which the project relates to tradition and the contemporary art scene.' (quoted from MA exam information, KHiO, 2013).

> ‘The visitor’s experience will not be complete or memorable if, once attracted to an object, their interest or questions (even just casual curiosity) are not addressed by the label. Without any references between what the words say and what visitors see, the label is a vacuum. When there is no connection between what the visitor sees, feels, smells, or hears, and what the words are about, the label is less likely to be read and comprehended.’ (Serrell 1996:147)

Here Serrell stresses the consequences of putting historically logical information first, which makes good sense when a text is read at leisure, versus first addressing what the viewer sees while standing before the work. When historically logical information comes first, this creates a mismatch in the ‘word-image relationship’ in the reader’s immediate context.

Although this bevy of tools is not exhaustive, chances are, it will go far in helping me analyse my study objects.

Problem with the project’s method and scope

No one visits an art museum just to read the mediational texts! If the meaning of words is in the context of their use (Wittgenstein 1958/1981:20, §43), it seems flawed to analyse the texts minus the context of the artworks, their placement, the walls, lighting, flooring, benches, aural features and so forth – so-called ‘paratexts’ (cf. Solhjell 2007; see also Klonk 2009; McClellan 2008:107-116). A painting may be placed on the visitor’s main axis of sight, given generous space and a lush velvet background, lit it in a special way and have a comfortable sofa placed in front – features indicating the work is the most important in the room – but the mediational text may only minimally relate to its significance. It is therefore of little practical value to treat the analysis in this approximately 100-page paper in isolation. Its scope is too limited to analyse the contextual features plus do close reading and comparative analysis. The research presented here should thus be seen as part of a much larger exhibition analysis endeavour carried on by a host of researchers.[29] With this, I turn to BKM’s JC Dahl texts.

[29] Worth special mention is the project ‘Komparativ studie av basisutstillinger i norske kunst- og kunstindustrimuseer’ (2010-11), which analyses the ‘innholdsmessige, arkitektoniske, designmessige og pedagogiske løsninger’ of 14 Norwegian art museums in the *Faglige museumsnettverk for kunst*. The project was headed up by Nasjonalmuseet for kunst, arkitektur og design, in collaboration with sociologist Dag Solhjell. http://kulturradet.no/vis-publikasjon/-/asset_publisher/N4dG/content/vurdering-av-faglige-museumsnettverk [23 March 2013]. This research project included comparative analysis of BKM’s permanent exhibitions *J.C. Dahl* and *Bab*el, registering which exhibitions included an art historical ‘master script’, but it did not do close readings of the texts.

3. BKM's *J.C. Dahl* Exhibition: Texts and Analysis

In Chapter 2, I introduced some of the main discourses, interpretive frames and devices I deem likely to be used in the texts I analyse. In Chapter 3, I account for and analyse the interpretive texts which Bergen Art Museum (BKM) has produced in connection with its J.C. Dahl exhibition. The texts to which this chapter is devoted are the introductory wall text and the A4-handout called *J.C. DAHL (1788-1857).* These two texts I also analyse in the context of the text on Lysverket from BKM's website and in the printed Program for 2012. Although the exhibition setting (lighting, furniture, etc.) is also a primary context for analysing the Dahl texts, I only introduce it briefly and minimally take it into account in the analysis and discussion. For my intents and purposes, the exhibition setting relates to the analysis of the A4 format, which I discuss at the end of the chapter.

General description of the J.C. Dahl wing at Lysverket

Lysverket's J.C. Dahl wing is like a series of white cubes (Floor plan: Appendix 1, p. 105). The floor is covered with dull-reflecting grey-blue linoleum, the walls are matt white and the windows have white Venetian blinds. The low ceiling hints that the building was not originally an art museum.[30] Numerous partitions suggest the possibility for an intimate feel to the rooms, but this possibility is cancelled out by a certain sterility. There is nowhere to sit. The middle of all the pictures is approximately eye-level. While this seems unremarkable for smaller pictures, the largest ones seem uncannily low. Little outdoor light filters through the venetian blinds, so spotlights are the major light source. Trained on the walls and frames more than on the pictures, the spotlights are pitched at an angle causing the top of each frame to cast a sharp shadow on the top of each canvas. Viewed in the context of the brightness of the walls and the reflective gold frames, most of the paintings seem relatively dark.

Upon entering the gallery, one stands in relative darkness and sees a wall upon which three paragraphs are printed. They are spatially arranged such that the left paragraph pertains to the left wing, and the Dahl paragraph is in the middle and concerns the wing directly

[30] Lysverket was built in 1938 to house the headquarters of Bergen's electric power company, serving in this capacity until 1998 when the company moved to new premises. Bergen Municipality's politicians resolved that the empty office building should become part of BKM. Lysverket opened to the public in 2000, the year Bergen was 'European City of Culture' (Ormhaug 2000:15).

behind the wall.[31] The spatial coordination is not necessarily grasped because visitors can read all three texts in the same fell swoop, but they can enter only one wing at a time.

On another white wall to the right is a clear Plexiglas box containing white A4 hand-outs in both Norwegian and English. These are not placed in direct contact with the artworks, and visitors are free to take them on the way into the exhibition, on the way out, or to ignore them entirely. Next to most pictures one finds tombstone labels whose background colour merges with the wall colour. The Dahl gallery texts have a four-level hierarchy: 1) introductory wall text; 2) A4; 3) tombstone labels[32]; 4) old tombstone-type information written on frames.

> **Introductory wall text for J.C. Dahl wing**
>
> Johan Christian Dahl (1788-1857) was one of the most important artists in Northern Europe during the Romantic period. He was professor of painting at the Dresden academy, and he is often considered akin to the best known Romantic painter in Germany, Caspar David Friedrich. Bergen Art Museum possesses a large and significant collection of Dahl's paintings and sketches, together with a wide selection of paintings by Dahl's students. In total, these works give a unique overview of the Dresden period in Norwegian Art History. [84 words]

The *identity-status discourse* is conveyed largely through the text genre of *reporting*. This can be noted through the state-of-being and having verbs. Dahl's status is stressed, first of all, through the superlative phrase 'one of the most important'. His status is further enhanced through a comparison with C.D. Friedrich. If Friedrich is awarded the superlative adjective 'best known', one could assume that Dahl is at least as well known. If a man is 'best known' or 'well known', the general assumption – baring *enfant terrible* – is that he is known for a favourable rather than onerous reason; he has done something praiseworthy to warrant fame. A further status enhancer is 'professor', the highest academic title. The mention of Dahl's students reflects back on his professorship, and readers end up (ideally) with the idea that Dahl made a big impact on the way Norwegian art history developed. Finally, the phrase 'is often considered' signals a shift from the past tense 'was' to the present tense. The shift marks

[31] When I visited BKM in March 2012, the wall text was removed and in its place was Christian Skredsvig's *Driving Snow on the Seine*. The Dahl wing is therefore no longer introduced by a wall text. In a wall text to the right of the Dahl wing, he is mentioned but not treated as importantly as when I started this research project.
[32] Not all works have tombstone labels at all times. One lacking a label on my visit in spring 2012 was Dahl's *Birch in a Storm*.

that Dahl was not merely important for past generations, but he remains so today and will continue to be important in the future.

This text also emphasizes BKM's identity and status. Two of the four sentences are devoted to this theme, and the positive connotations of the adjectives 'large', 'significant', 'wide' and 'unique' all modify the collection which 'BKM possesses'. In the case of 'possesses', the tense is significant for binding together the past and present, but also for linking Dresden in Germany and Bergen in Norway. The museum situates itself as a significant hub on the artworld's map. If BKM 'possesses' the art, it simultaneously claims a kind of owner's relation to northern European Romanticism as such. In the final sentence one reads the phrase 'these works give'. There is a promise here: if you see these works you will receive something valuable, which possibly relating to your own identity and status.

In sum, it seems like identity-status is the primary discourse of this introductory text. It signals that readers are about to see works of high art historical value, works on a level at least as high as anything elsewhere in northern Europe.

The implied reader of this text is someone with a background in the humanities, perhaps literary history. This can be sensed from there being no general introduction to what Romanticism is. But the text does not assume the reader has heard of C.D. Friedrich or J.C. Dahl. Hence the reader is not necessarily expected to have studied art history.

Authority – that of the museum, the artist and the author – is kept at a fairly consistent level throughout the paragraph. In terms of modality, the statement that Dahl 'was one of the most important' reflects high affinity. It suggests the author is an authority on the subject. This is followed up with a fact-based statement, and, as one will recall from Chapter 2, verifiable facts add rigour. The phrase 'is often considered' is also significant because it makes the claim about Dahl's status seem defensible without documentation. It incites the readers to do gap-filling: who is it that considers? The conventions of reading such passages compel one to fill in 'experts' because if the considerers were non-experts, there would be little reason for readers, who have already conceded that they are being legitimately dominated, to care what the non-authoritative person thinks (cf. Bauman 2004:150ff).

Turning now to the A4; does it develop and further entrench the discursive aspects I detected of the introductory wall text? What can the tools (questions) in my toolbox reveal?

A4

I present the English A4 here rather than the Norwegian because it makes more sense to me to refer to the English text. There where the two versions diverge markedly or where I feel it might aid understanding, I include the Norwegian [in brackets].

J. C. DAHL (1788-1857)

[Section 1] Painting apprentice and craftsman

§1. Johan Christian Claussen Dahl was born in 1788 in Bergen, where he grew up in humble circumstances. He showed talent for drawing as a child, and at 15 years old, he signed on as a craftsman-painter's apprentice. [Cut from the English: During his apprenticeship, he produced everything from stencil paintings to finer decorative works.]

§2. The works *From Bergen Harbour* (BB.M.796), *Town Hall Square* (BB.M.626) and *From Engen* (BB.M.627), which Dahl painted when he was 18, probably belonged to more comprehensive pictorial programmes commissioned by the Bergen bourgeoisie for their private homes. Local landscapes [prospektmaleriet] constituted an especially popular genre in this type of décor, and the execution [utførelsen] in Dahl's pictures follows the genre's normal conventions: a sober, detailed rendering in light colours, of the city and environs.

§3. These paintings tended to be paired with seascapes that were also locally related. The two canvases [maleri] entitled *The Battle of Alvøen* (BB.M.794 and BB.M.797) portray an event that happened in 1808, during the Napoleonic Wars. The English frigate *Tartar* was chased out to sea by five Bergensian gunboats; an exploit about which the people of Bergen felt considerable pride.

[Section 2] From Bergen to Europe

§4. The Bergen educationalist and humanist Lyder Sagen (1777-1850) saw that the young painter's talent extended beyond producing mere decoration. Sagen solicited funds from Bergen's wealthier citizens so that Dahl could study at Copenhagen's art academy. Dahl was 23 when he left Norway. He stayed in Copenhagen for seven years and then moved to Dresden, his base for the rest of his life. In 1820 he became a member of the Dresden Academy and was appointed professor of paining there in 1824. Dahl returned to his homeland five times; he travelled extensively throughout Norway in 1826, 1834, 1839, 1844 and 1850.

[Section 3] Influences [Forbilder] and teachers

The artists I try to learn from are Ruisdael and Everdingen [...], but my first teacher is nature itself. It is a pity there are no crags and waterfalls here; one must make do with the water pump. (Letter to Lyder Sagen, 1812)

§5. Dahl only received instruction in drawing at Copenhagen's art academy. He had to learn to become a professional painter through his own efforts, mainly by studying and copying Old Masters. The Dutch painter Jacob van Ruisdael (1628/29-1682) is generally considered one of the most important seventeenth-century landscape painters. Allart van Everdingen (1621-1675), one of Ruisdael's sources of inspiration, specialized in landscapes with a 'Nordic character'. In Ruisdael's pictures, for example *Landscape with a Fallen Tree* (BB.B.3149), it was the naturalistic representation of the landscape that preoccupied Dahl; in Everdingen's works, it was the well-orchestrated [gjennomkomponerte] presentation of the Nordic landscape with all its typical [uunselige] characteristics [cut from the English: mountains, waterfalls, pine forests and humble log buildings], such as we see in *Water-powered Sawmill in a Swedish Landscape* (BB.B.3082).

§6. Dahl's studies of Dutch landscape paintings played a large role in his development as an artist, but as he claimed, the most important studies were of nature itself. Dahl's contemporaries did not share his naturalistic approach. Throughout his career he make detailed outdoor sketches, many of which are preserved in Bergen Art Museum's collections.

[Section 4] The Norwegian landscape

§7. When Dahl started studying in Copenhagen the classical genre hierarchy still held sway. According to this hierarchical thinking, the status of a motival genre was determined according to its ability to have a moral or acculturating function [utøve en moralsk eller oppdragende funksjon], and in this respect, landscape painting held low status in comparison with history paintings and portraits.

§8. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, Romanticism's new view of nature began to affect the way people viewed paintings. Rather than seeing nature as a force needing to be tamed and cultivated, the Romantics were fascinated by nature's untamed, raw character. Nature, as God had created it, could be seen as a symbol of the power of creativity itself [selve skaperkraften], and the contemplation of imposing natural

landscapes was thus seen as a means for ennobling a person's own nature [det storslåtte naturlandskapet ble dermed en karakterforedlende virksomhet]. These Romantic notions led to a greater appreciation of landscapes, both for their own sake and as artistic motifs.

§9. The first landscapes J.C. Dahl painted in Copenhagen were imaginary and had a 'Norwegian character' inspired by Allart van Everdingen. When he painted *Fjellandskap / Nordic Landscape with a River* (BB.M.409) in 1825, he had not set foot in Norway for eleven years. Although entirely realistic [cut from English: even down to the smallest detail], what we see is not an actual place. The naturalistic elements are brought together to create an idealized whole which included everything the Romantics looked for in nature: steep mountain precipices, swirling rapids and dense, dark forests. There is potential drama everywhere, even in the sky, which is coloured by an impending storm. People are present in the landscape but they are small and insignificant – almost like tableau figures in a staged scene where nature plays the leading role.

§10. After his first trip to Norway in 1826, Dahl began specializing in motifs from Norway. Even though the pictures now show real landscapes, he still idealizes them. For instance, in the picture *From Stedje in Sogn* (BB.M.144), the mountains in the middle are rendered more steeply and pushed farther forward than they are in real life. He has used these means to intensify the already-dramatic features in the landscape. This desire to add additional dramatic effect is something we find in most of Dahl's topographically-determined paintings.

[Section 5] Dahl as a Romantic painter

§11. Dahl's conscientious nature studies laid the foundation for pictures which helped define 'the Norwegian landscape' in the public's consciousness. Dahl's naturalism, as we have seen, was to some extent the servant of Idealism. It is not only Dahl's effective adaptation of details that can be characterized as Romantic. In many of the Norwegian landscapes we also find the typically Romantic tendency to see human characteristics in nature's forms.

§12. The birch tree recurs in most of Dahl's Nordic landscapes as a characterizing element. In *Birch Tree in a Storm* (BB.M.539), we find this typically Nordic tree in a condensed [fortettet], iconic representation of Norwegian nature. The weather-bitten tree – tenaciously clinging to its mountain shelf and withstanding the storm – has been interpreted as a metaphor for 'the nation's battle against the storms of history waged on a barren soil' [nasjonens kamp mot historiens stormer i et karrig land].

§13. Dahl also explored motifs other than Norwegian mountain landscapes, painting pictures where the European Romantic is more clearly evidenced. We experience mystery and a sensitivity to the atmosphere in pictures such as *Stege in Moonlight* (BB.404) and in *Dresden in Evening Light* (BB.M.148), and man's battle against the forces of nature in the seascapes *Shipwreck on the Norwegian Coast* (BB.M.1239) and *Stormy Weather on Nærøy Fjord* (BB.M.630).

[Section 6] The father of Norwegian painting

§14. J.C. Dahl has been called the father of Norwegian painting for several reasons. He was the first academically educated painter on a European level, and the first Norwegian artist in the modern sense of the word. He also played a decisive role in establishing a Norwegian art scene.

§15. As a professor in Dresden, J.C. Dahl tutored several younger Norwegian artists, and even though he lived on foreign soil all his adult life, he enthusiastically participated in Norwegian cultural life. He procured artworks for private collectors and took the initiative to establish permanent collections, among others, the National Gallery in Oslo and Bergen Art Society.

§16. Dahl's scientific interest in Norway's medieval stave churches was an important incentive for the founding of Norway's Heritage Association in 1844, thus the establishment of an organized means for safeguarding cultural heritage. [1,258 words]

ANALYSIS OF A4

Introductory comments on the A4. BKM's practice in Lysverket, since 2000 when it opened, has been to print interpretive information on A4 sheets.[33] These are kept in Plexiglas boxes and are free for the taking. One box holds Norwegian text, the other English, and the security personnel tell me that almost all visitors – pupils visiting with their school class as well as international cruise tourists – take them.

The first feature to strike me as I visually compare the Norwegian and the English versions of this text is that they are of equal length and are presented in two columns of sans-serif Calibri 11-point font. The combination of easily read font presented in short lines

[33] Before Gunnar Kvaran's directorship (1997-2001), there were no gallery texts other than tombstone labels. Knut Ormhaug, BKM's present director informs me that before Kvaran came, the only interpretive texts were published in for-purchase catalogues (Personal communiqué, 14 March 2012).

suggests that the formal text features are deliberately chosen to aid reading speed. A few ideas have been cut from the English in order to fit it all on the A4. The Norwegian contains 1,128 words vs the English 1,258.[34] There are many things to be said about the A4 format, but I will discuss this in the final section of A4 analysis.

Repetition. As was made clear in Chapter 2, when something is repeated from one text to another, it is strengthened. So to begin the analysis, what in the introductory wall text is repeated in the A4? The status claim of being 'one of the most important artists in northern Europe' is repeated in the explanation of why Dahl is important in Norway: he 'helped define the Norwegian landscape in the public's consciousness' (§11). The wall text's other status claim – that BKM is a high status institution because it contains a significant collection of works by Dahl and his students – is followed up and thus strengthened by dint of naming the works and mentioning the sketches in the magazine (§6).

Text genres. Through analysing verbs, I identify four basic text genres. The past tense verbs in §1 – 'Dahl grew', 'he signed on', 'he produced' – point to a *narrative* genre used to tell a biographical story. §2.2 has the past tense verb 'constituted', but this points to the *explanation* genre (cf. Ravelli 2006:21) used here to explain what kind of pictures were popular amongst Bergen's bourgeoisie. Past tense verbs temporally organize ideas and are also used in §8 and 9 to tell about the Romantics' thought processes and actions: 'The Romantics were fascinated', they 'looked for' and their notions 'led to…' There where the verbs are present tense, they often are state-of-being verbs or possessives signalling a *report* (cf. Ravelli 2006:20). This is apparent in §9 in clauses such as 'people are present' and in §10's 'the mountains are rendered' and 'dramatic effect is something we find…' Another use of present tense verbs, but now more active, is in the *exposition* genre. It is used in §12-13 to talk about how 'we experience' and 'we find' romantic painting. Ravelli (2006:22) says that the exposition genre is commonly used to present a point of view supported by arguments. This is the case in Section 5's claim of Dahl as the father of Norwegian painting. It starts with a claim and follows it up with four supporting arguments. If, however, one text genre can be said to be more dominant than the others, this must be the narrative; it organizes the other genres, enabling them to be interwoven. It is also a means for presenting Dahl's works chronologically. It offers a series of temporally-ordered 'hooks' on which to hang pictures.

[34] The version presented here contains minimal changes made in 2012.

Main interpretive frames and discourses. Now the conundrum emerges of discerning and distinguishing between the main interpretive frames and discourses. They seem almost interchangeable at times. But to reiterate from Chapter 2: interpretive frames are those things used to interpret the art, but they are couched within discourses. The frames of *the artist's biography, influence and inspiration,* and the moniker '*father of Norwegian painting',* which function to interpret Dahl's life and works, are situated in the Dahl discourse, the art history discourse and the status discourse. The other interpretive frames I discuss, the *genre hierarchy, genres of landscape painting* and *geographical location,* are also couched inside the art historical and status discourses and affect the identity and status of Dahl, BKM and Bergen.

With respect to the *artist's biography,* the A4's title includes Dahl's birth and death dates. This small bit of information shows the author is complying with an art historical convention and seeks scientific rigor and trustworthiness. Given how the text is liberally sprinkled with dates, the level of intended rigour seems, at least visually, evenly distributed.

As the text-genre analysis indicated, Dahl's biography is set in a narrative structure. It is a traditional story of upward mobility leading chronologically from Dahl's humble beginnings, to working as an apprentice, then being discovered by Lyder Sagen. This is followed up with the hardship of being an autodidact, the expression of his 'genius' in going his own way rather than following the pack.[35] The genius theme flows easily into his acceptance into the Dresden academy, then on to his professorial and patriarchal status. The narrative follows a standard pattern of organization that generates meaning by placing Dahl as the main protagonist in a specific time and place; then come complications, but the hero, through his own ingenuity and helped by 'nature itself', overcomes them.

As intimated in Chapter 2, a common interpretive approach used in many art museum texts is to speak of an *artist's influences and sources of inspiration*. The Dahl A4 is no exception. Yet it is not only the author who takes recourse in these; Dahl is quoted to reveal that he sees himself as having sources of influence and inspiration. This is done in a striking way, however, because it does not present Dahl as a passive person who is merely acted upon. 'I try to learn', the active agent is quoted as saying. The art historian Michael Baxandall (1985:58-62) remarks that many texts about artistic influences present the artist as passively acted upon, rather like a billiard ball involuntarily moving in a particular direction after being

[35] Lyder Sagen called Dahl an artist genius when raising funds for him to study in Copenhagen. See the *Anbefalelsesbrev* in Ormhaug (1988:73).

hit by a forceful object. When Dahl is shown to be actively seeking inspiration and influence, he gains more authority for having deliberately chosen them himself. Thus the relations between Dahl and his influences are seen as more authentic than if merely accorded to him by a present-day art historian. Finally, influence and inspiration also are manifest in the context of Dahl's patriarchal status. But rather than mentioning any particular students or stating how they actively chose to be influenced by Dahl, Dahl alone is seen as the active influencer who played, tutored, enthusiastically participated, procured, took initiative and established.

Dahl is called the *father of Norwegian painting.* This identity is conditioned on his professorship, an identity marker and fact-based statement repeated from the wall text. The denotative content in 'father' holds connotative content leading into a much greater idea, one involving intertextual borrowing (cf. Whitehead 2012:166). Dahl, as a patriarch fathering many children (artists), triggers connotations of Abraham, the most legendary patriarch of all. He reverberates in the mind's ear. The patriarch analogy is linked to the Great Covenant in Genesis 12:1-2. It is as if Lyder Sagen says to Dahl, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show thee' (v.1). Dahl moves to Copenhagen, then to Dresden, and the act of leaving his homeland is a precondition for his ability to become the 'father of Norwegian painting', a marker organizing Dahl's identity. But the analogy extends further: 'And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing' (v.2). Hence not only many artists but the whole Norwegian art establishment stem from Dahl. The patriarch-covenant connotations suggest that through J.C. Dahl, the Norwegian nation has been and continues to be blessed.

Yet another clause organizes Dahl's identity, suggesting it was foreordained that he would be a great teacher: 'The Bergen educationalist and humanist Lyder Sagen' (§4). The connotations of 'humanist' cause one to think of Sagen as a Bergensian Erasmus.[36] As Sagen's protégé, Dahl is positioned to learn to be like his mentor. So the fact of Sagen being a humanist and education specialist anticipates Dahl's own future. This recalls a medieval hermeneutical device one often finds reflected on medieval church walls – of pairing Old and New Testament figures and events. Although it may be a bit far-fetched in the present context, one can see Sagen as a 'type' prefiguring Dahl, who becomes the archetype for art-academic

[36] The relation between Sagen and Erasmus lies in their shared interest in self-fulfilment through learning. See Johan Huizinga (1957) *Erasmus and the Age of Reformation*. New York: Harper Torchbook, pp. 39-46. Like Erasmus, Sagen enabled those from the lower classes to share in a kind of learning formerly monopolized by the upper classes. In teaching, he did not focus on rote learning but on helping students think for themselves. It is conceivable that Dahl, also a child of the Enlightenment, assimilated this principle in becoming a successful autodidact. Cf. Ormhaug (1988) and http://snl.no/.nbl_biografi/Lyder_Sagen/utdypning [16 August 2012]

education in Norway. The borrowed notion from biblical typology becomes an interpretive frame. It is as if the trajectory for his life and legacy is foreordained.

The concepts *genre hierarchy* and *genres of landscape painting* reveal the significance of abstraction. All concepts are of course abstractions, and one quality of abstraction which is particularly useful in the A4 is that of multiple applications. It means readers do not need to physically stand before the paintings. They are removed from the actual phenomena and see a more abstract work – the romantic landscape *per se*. This primacy of the idea over the object can be helpful in cases where BKM cannot present the works of other artists used to contextualize Dahl. This is the case in §5, which mentions Ruisdael and Everding, giving their dates, work titles and catalogue numbers. Reader cannot see these paintings. But does *giving the abstract idea primacy* really help readers while they are standing in the Dahl wing? The non-art-historians are probably befuddled by the Ruisdael and Everding references. As Trench explains (2008:8), it may be easy for readers to grasp general ideas, but not smaller facts such as dates, catalogue numbers and names, especially when no object accompanies them. It would take objects to make the Ruisdael and Everding facts seem illuminating. But as I read and re-read the A4, I realize that it does also point to direct sensory awareness. Perhaps the most striking index to an object is in §12: 'the weather-bitten tree – tenaciously clinging to its mountain shelf and withstanding the storm'. When the object in the viewers' presence is vividly spoken of, it invites participation, whereas the abstractions aid analytical distance.

The most important abstraction in the A4 is g*enre hierarchy* (§7-8). This is a meta-concept organizing the status of all the painting genres, and it aids thinking about them analytically. The account of the genre hierarchy is a condition of possibility for being able to point out the importance of Nature Romanticism and Dahl's status as one of northern Europe's highest-ranking painters. The genre hierarchy is also significant for the A4 format; because it has multiple application, it obviates the need for individual interpretive labels.

After the genre hierarchy, the *painting genres* present themselves as second in importance: stencil painting and decorative painting (§1), local landscapes (*prospektmaleriet*) (§2), marine painting (§3), nature romanticism in idealized landscapes with a Nordic character (§5), and romantic Norwegian landscapes (§11). These abstractions serve a triple function. First, they indicate a hierarchical structure that pertains to the past. Second, the author binds together the past and the present by using the painting genres to structure the works today; almost every time a specific work is mentioned, it is treated as an example of a painting genre through the phrases 'such as', for instance' and 'as seen in'. These report-genre phrases put

the paintings in categories. Third, the abstract categories of painting genres help the reader gain analytical distance.

The *geographical locations* where Dahl found his motifs affect the identity of his works, Dahl himself, Bergen and BKM. In the A4's Section 1, Dahl's landscapes are classified as local and Bergensian, in Section 3 they are Nordic, in 4 they are Norwegian, and in 5 they are Norwegian, Nordic and Romantic. In section 6 they are consistently classified as Norwegian. Starting in S4§9, the classification could be seen as more generally European (e.g., 'everything the Romantics looked for in nature'), but on account of 'steep mountain precipices, swirling rapids and dense, dark forests', one is hard pressed not to interpret them as regional, from *Vestlandet* (western Norway). Thus the text progresses from the local level of Bergen, to the regional Vestlandet, to the national level, to the European level. And interwoven in each geographical level, one finds individual-level human characteristics in the motifs: gunboats relate to the Bergensian's pride, the birch tree on the precipice relates to the Norwegian's tenacious character (especially in Vestlandet) and battle for a distinct national identity, and nature as God created it relates to the power of human creativity which can be said to apply to Europeans in general.

Section 2, which mentions no particular works, serves most pointedly to geographically condition Dahl's identity. It situates him locally in Bergen, then in Copenhagen, then in Dresden and finally back in Norway. This condensed overview of geographical movement reflects the movement in his identity elsewhere in the text, from being a local painter to a Norwegian National Romantic and to a European Romantic. There is synergy here, since the interaction of geographically-conditioned identities, when combined, causes him to accrue more status than any single geographically-related identity could give.

Upon the suggestion of my advisor, I counted how many times the privileged signs 'Bergen', 'Norway', 'Norwegian', 'Nordic', 'home', 'homeland' and 'return' are mentioned (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:37, 39). Indeed, there is only one paragraph (§8) where these words that are significant for a Bergen-national discourse do not appear. From this simple counting exercise, one begins to grasp how Bergen and BKM's collection are treated as central within Norway, within Europe and within European Romanticism.

Bergen's identity is paramount. The local-level works mentioned in §1-3 point to a socio-cultural and historical frame, which in turn situates the works in their presumably original and intended context of use. Since they are no longer *in situ*, the information might just bring before the mind's eye the elegantly-clothed, powder-wigged Bergensians who once admired these works by candlelight, in a far different setting from the present white cube. Through the

sentences about the *Battle of Alvøen* (§3), one learns that these early viewers cared a great deal about their identity as Bergensians, that they commissioned paintings to enhance and celebrate that identity. The social-historical context in which Dahl produced his juvenilia is given priority and reinforces the idea of a Bergensian identity set apart from national identity. This set-apart-ness is still relevant for BKM's local visitors. The city is proud of its status as Dahl's birthplace, and because the fact is mentioned in the A4's first sentence rather than buried somewhere further down, it cannot be overlooked.

Clearly, then, the geographical movement reflected through landscape classification binds Dahl to Bergen, then Bergen in Norway and Bergen in Europe, all of which reinforce the museum's identity as expressed in the introductory wall text: BKM, by virtue of the works it possesses, is not a middling museum on the edge of Europe; it holds an important position in the hierarchy of the Norwegian and the northern European artworld.

Readers' participation in romantic experience and the National Romantic discourse. In the hypotheses presented in the introductory chapter, I said I expected to find the National Romantic discourse in the Dahl texts, but I did not expect the BKM texts to overtly try to involve readers in experiences, be they aesthetic or romantic or what have you. It is therefore worth testing these assumptions. This is also a worthy inquiry because the 'romanticism' in *Nature Romanticism* (§8-13) pertains to emotions, to how one feels rather than thinks about nature. It concerns an encounter that supposedly bypasses cogitation and cuts directly to feelings. It could be described as a heightened spiritual or physical 'gut response' to nature or a landscape painting. As such, viewing Romantic paintings would seem to invite a modicum of interactivity.

One reads about the characteristics of Romantic painting: exaggerated focal points (§10), human characteristics in nature (§11), mankind's struggle against nature, and sensitivity to atmosphere (§13), but they are not specifically asked or told to do anything. They might be invited, indirectly, to participate emotionally through the phrase 'We experience mystery and a sensitivity' (§13) – assuming the claim 'we experience' will be followed up by the readers actually having an experience – but since the way the works are mentioned so clearly points beyond the works to characteristics of the abstract genre, it seems unlikely that readers will have the experience. They are encouraged to see the pictures analytically, with mental distance. Romantic experience is thus treated mostly as a thing of the past rather than something to engage in today.

But this is not to say that reader-viewers cannot participate. For what about participation through the mental senses of touch, taste, sound and smell? These are means for becoming absorbed in artworks, and they can be evoked through adjectival phrases. In §9, 'mountain precipices' can invoke a roughness to the hands of clambering over boulders; 'swirling rapids' can cause the mind's ear to hear rushing water; 'dense, dark forests' tweaks the mind's nose with the smell of pine; and 'the sky coloured by an impending storm' could cause readers to zip their jackets. It is largely the adjectives in §9 that trigger mental participation. When the text says people are in the landscape but are small and insignificant, 'almost like tableau figures in a staged scene where nature plays the leading role' (§9), readers may feel themselves to be small and insignificant extras in the world.

Readers are invited to identify personally with Dahl through the *humanizing frame* used at the start of Section 3. This decreases distance (theorized in Chapter 2's discussion on authority). Humanizing can be introduced through evocative quotes (they paint a picture for the mind's eye), through being thought-provoking, and through including humorous content (Trench 2009:24). The Dahl quote contains all three devices: it evokes dramatic imagery, it is thought-provoking in how it presents nature as the greatest teacher of all, and it humorously juxtaposes wild nature with the prosaic water pump. Through the direct quote, the distanced patriarch appears as a flesh-and-blood student with the ability for self-irony.

Yet another means for bringing Dahl closer to readers is through linking him with concerns readers might themselves have, or with things they have experienced first-hand. As to the former, the theme of education is apt. Dahl only received formal instruction in drawing. He had to take responsibility for his own education and learn to paint on his own. His stick-to-it-iveness and determination are qualities readers probably can relate to in their own lives. As for first-hand experience, the text may be said to interactively engage with touristic readers through Dahl's legacy. When traveling throughout Norway, it is common to visit stave churches and folk museums with old log buildings and paraphernalia. If readers have experienced these things, it should be possible to realize that it is partly thanks to Dahl.

I have argued that the way the A4 presents Nature Romanticism offers possibilities for reader to participate through identifying with figures in the landscape and through letting their minds' ear, nose and hands become involved. For Norwegian readers, participation is also possible through the text's repeated use of the words 'Norway' and 'Norwegian'. But one can also descry participation through the national-cultural variant of Romanticism. Culturally speaking, the A4's Norwegian language is primary (it makes no reference to religion, clothing style and folkways, even though these aspects are cited in Dah's paintings, (cf. Jørgensen &

Phillips 1999:171). One striking fragment in §12 is 'the nation's battle against the storms of history in a land with poor soil (*nasjonens kamp mot historiens stormer i et karrig land).* Just as individuals battle for survival in the face of violent nature, so also the Norwegians as a nation have battled for existence. This idea resonates with those whose families have lived in Norway for multiple generations. It is a hegemonic discourse in Norwegian culture, constantly reinforced through the 17th of May celebration. Furthermore, most ethnic Norwegians have forefathers who emigrated from the *karrig land*, and many North American visitors are their decedents. So perhaps the prime aspects of participation through the cultural version of National Romanticism happen through family roots.

There are also visitors who represent the cultural multiplicity now touted by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture. The cultural approach as expressed in the A4 offers less opportunity for these people to participate. Nothing in the text seems explicitly geared towards a culturally diverse readership. Laying the text aside, however, even immigrants from Africa's horn can see the landscape paintings, the poor soil and battle for survival as resonating with their own history. It is possible to identify with the landscape even as an immigrant, to see it as marking personal identity and to participate in it vicariously. Take for example the mention of trees: the fallen tree, the tree in a storm, the iconic and typically Nordic tree, the weather-bitten tree. This major metaphor, in its extended sense, offers the potential for participatory opportunities. One thinks first of all of 'rootedness' and 'transplantation', but the extended metaphor is not pursued in the A4.

The A4's level of language and the implied reader. I at first thought the A4 text would be easily accessible to early-intermediate level readers. This was because it was scholarly but not pompous. The only problematic concepts would be 'genre hierarchy' and -Isms (Romanticism, Idealism, Naturalism). What, for instance, is the difference between Naturalism and Realism in painting, and does the distinction follow the same pattern as in nineteenth-century literature? Does Romanticism have to do with falling in love? – I could imagine a teenager wondering. To control for my assumption, I asked a middle school (*ungdomskole*) teacher to read the Norwegian version of the Dahl A4 at a leisurely pace. It took him four minutes and five seconds. (Standing readers will probably need a bit longer.) I asked him who he thought the implied reader was. 'A first year student in art history at university', he replied.[37] For himself, he found the text captivating and enjoyable, but it was

[37] I have since been informed that University of Bergen's art history students are encouraged to read BKM's A4s.

not targeted to his pupils. I also presented the text to a *videregående* (high school) teacher, all of whose students were planning on doing a humanities degree at university. She corroborated the first informant's opinions, pointing out the concepts which teenagers will probably not come across until their last year of *videregående* or *ex phil* (first university semester).

For starters, there is the modifier *hovedsakelig* (mainly); the ungdomskole teacher says young Norwegians will be more familiar with *først og fremst* (first and foremost). I myself struggle to see that *hovedsakelig* would be difficult for early-intermediate readers, but I can agree that *unnselige* (lowly or humble, pertaining to log cabins in the Nordic landscape) might be. Painting genres such as *sjablongmalerier* (stencil painting), *prospektmotivet* (local landscapes) and *tablå* (tableaux) will probably be confusing, and even history painting could be problematic because it also can include motifs based on legends. Then there is the compound concept – *karakterforedling* (character-improving) – and the phrases *å utøve en moralsk eller oppdragende funksjon* (to exercise a moral or educative function) and *samvittighetsfulle naturstudier* (conscientious or scrupulous studies of nature). The young (early intermediate) reader, the informants think, would probably give up in the middle of Section 3 – at least by the time they come to *gjennomkomponerte framstillingen* (well-composed or orchestrated). They will probably not get as far as *Birch in a Storm*, which is generally thought to be the most important work in the Dahl wing.

Most of her pupils, the *videregående* teacher opines, are generally difficult to motivate, even though they aim to study humanities subjects at university. They are not motivated to grapple with abstract ideas such as 'an activity that ennobles a person's nature' (*karakterforedlende virksomhet*). From this, it seems the text is pitched for readers who have already started university or are presumably already at the high proficiency level.

For elementary or early-intermediate readers, 'environs', 'massif' and 'procure' could have been more understandable if translated, respectively, as 'surroundings', mountain' and 'get'. And all the concepts which intermediate-level readers of Norwegian struggle with, are, in their English version, likely to be difficult for native English readers not versed in the humanities. If readers lack the background knowledge necessary for understanding concepts, the lack will cancel out the text's function of providing information and interpretation (cf. Engebretsen 2007:19). It is also worrying in light of my second informant's assertion that her students would stop reading. 'If visitors encounter an unfamiliar word that is not explained, they are likely to stop reading' (Trench 2009:41).

As stated, my first informant found the A4 immensely enjoyable. The focus is on ideas, succinctly presented and well-ordered, and one can learn from it without feeling a need to see

the pictures. But if this is the case, the text's language prompts the question of why it might be relevant to read the A4 while experiencing the works first-hand. This situation points to an ambiguity: the text can seem captivating, as it did for my Norwegian middle-school teacher, or it can be a 'turn-off' as soon as one comes to an unfamiliar concept. The implied reader is thus probably university educated, at least someone with a keen interest in art history. Pitching the text to university-educated readers is appropriate because this is the type of person who already tends to read and wants to read in art museums.[38] That said, one can certainly appreciate the artworks without reading the A4, and one need not have art history or higher education to find the works meaningful.

The author and authority. What does the A4 divulge about the exertion of authority? Due to the abstract concepts and the paintings being used largely as examples of painting genres, it does not seem like the author (this is, I repeat, a construct of the writer(s) plus others involved in the text production process), is standing before specific works while in the act of writing. One senses someone very familiar with the works, but even more familiar with books, an author removed from the concrete phenomena and seeking a more abstract work – the romantic landscape as such.

Starting at the level of dates and names; facts such as these are tools for making the text authoritative because they can be checked. The art historical vocabulary also engenders authority because the terminology is situated in a discourse entered into by professionals. Then there is the avoidance of conditional and low-affinity words such as 'perhaps' and 'might', and only once is 'could' used modally, in the phrase 'Nature, as God had created it, could be seen as a symbol of the power of creativity'. Finally, I have already mentioned that readers are not specifically told to participate by doing anything like look, follow or imagine. The author mentions at one point how 'we' feel when looking at works: 'we experience mystery and a sensitivity to the atmosphere' (§13). I suggest that subjective feelings have largely been avoided in order to come across as scientific, thus authoritative. But this is a striking absence since the text deals largely with Romanticism, which is famous for promoting subjective feelings.

[38] Trench (2009) states that at least 50% of the V&A's visitors are university graduates and 21% have an MA or PhD. Serrell (1996) suggests that most all museum visitors over the age of 7 are potential readers, but that most readers are adults. Further, most art museum visitors who visit on their own are adults. But, she says, 'probably less than 30% percent and maybe more like 5%' of visitors are 'analytical learners', that is, people who will enjoy learning through abstract ideas (Serrell 1996:56).

The author also comes across as authoritative through the mediator's role as a bridge between Dahl and readers. To explain; distance exists to begin with, since Dahl is removed in time, but that distance is augmented by giving him the prestigious title 'father of Norwegian painting' (Dahl would not have called himself this). If the whole text had consisted of, say, quotes from Dahl's journals, there would be less distance and Dahl's 'great patriarch' image would be diminished. So the author first increases the distance between Dahl and readers through what Bauman (2004) calls 'analytical relay', then bridges the gap.

A frame that would have engendered authority for nineteenth-century viewers is to appeal to the *artist's intentions* as a 'lamp' for how the works should be interpreted (cf. Abrams 1953:23). This is not done, however, and readers are instead told about what Dahl has actually done in ways that can be empirically verified; he has pushed elements forward and made them more dramatic than they are in real life (§10).

As intimated in the discussions of nature romanticism and the implied reader, the A4 lacks a visitor-oriented (post-structuralist) frame. By this I mean that it does not invite readers to contribute their own interpretations. Such an opportunity would have reflected an awareness of the contingency of standard discourses, but it would also cause the text to lose some authority because it would 'meet readers on their own level of sophistication' (Montebello 2004:158); it would 'disable the interpretive benefits of centuries of specialist expertise' (Whitehead 2012:39). With visitor-centred frames, says Whitehead (2012:176), there is rarely the sense that readers should have to work to understand the text.

The A4 speaks only with an art professional's voice, to the exclusion of all others. The author is one or more persons speaking on behalf of the museal institution, Dahl and a long line of art historians, and is fully in agreement with them and has a voice seamlessly fused with authoritative precursors.

As a final reflection on authority, it is worth mentioning how it interacts with the status discourse discussed earlier. While it was discovered that all the texts are permeated with the status discourse, never is the word 'status' mentioned. Without a critical eye, readers are unlikely to realize the discourse is there. Recalling Chapter 2's passage on gap-filling; when a presupposition about status is hidden, it cannot be directly countered and thus becomes further entrenched.

The A4 in the context of the 2012 Program and BKM's webpages

To analyse the Dahl texts further, I now introduce BKM's 2012 exhibition program and webpage information about the JC Dahl exhibition. Both say the following about Lysverket:

ART 1400-1990 Lysverket

Take an art historical trek from the 15th to the 20th century.

On Lysverket's first and second floors, you can explore the core of the museum's collections. The works range from Russian and Greek icons, Old Master paintings and the Norwegian Golden Age, to Norwegian and international Modernism. World renowned artists from the last century such as Edvard Munch, Pablo Picasso and Paul Klee are represented with several works. A separate wing is devoted to 'the father of Norwegian Painting', J.C. Dahl, and his students.[39]

This exposition repeats the status discourse. BKM's image is as a cultural institution of international importance. Its holdings include works by the most internationally known Norwegian painter, Munch, but also the arguably most important Modern painter, Picasso. The text thus stresses that BKM is an important node on the international 'axis of art', and that though its possessions, it contributes to international culture.

The boldface sentence is remarkable for being an *imperative* instructing readers to go on a *journey* – a master metaphor – through six centuries of art history. Venturing forth on the journey and playing the role of *explorer*, another master metaphor ('you can explore the core…), visitor-readers might say to themselves, 'I bought my ticket and to get my money's worth, I need to see everything, so I mustn't dawdle on the journey.' This approach to experiencing art brings to mind the title of an essay by Philip Fisher (2003): 'Walking Past Works of Art: Aesthetic Distraction in a Culture of Engulfment', and it reveals a conflict which can arise when combining the journey and explorer metaphors. There is too much to see at one go, and yet one feels one must see it all. Taking a journey of such scope implies that the standard of success is to be 'on the move', but the explorer metaphor suggests discovery. It encourages visitors to 'look, understand and find their own reward, whether aesthetic, intellectual or personal' (Trench 2009:16). The likely outcome, then, is to become absolutely exhausted, to be dissatisfied with one's efforts, no matter having spent the whole day walking slowly on hard floors.

The target readership for the webpage/annual program is wider than the A4's, and its authorial voice is that of a marketing department more than art historians. This can be sensed through text length and namedropping (Picasso, Klee), the pronoun 'you' suggesting a

[39] http://www.kunstmuseene.no/Default.asp?enhet=kunstmuseum&kat=557&sp=2 [21 August 2012]

populist tone, and the superlative-sounding adjectives 'Old Master', 'Golden' and 'world renowned'. It seems like *fishing*: readers of the webpages and annual program are like fish; the aim is to catch them on the 'hooks' of a direct appeal ('you can explore') and 'shiny' names and superlative phrases. Once they are hooked and hauled in, they experience continuity between the Internet text and the Dahl wall text through direct appeals to the status discourse ('one of the most important', 'often considered akin to the best known', 'BKM possesses a large and significant collection'). But by the time they read the A4, a different author takes over and gives them a solid dose of art history.

In the final section of analysis, I fulfil a promise made near the chapter's beginning, namely, to analyse the A4 format.

The A4 format

The benefits of the A4 are many: it is cheap to produce, easy to revise, readers can move and find optimal reading light, and they can take it home. But there are problems too. First, visitors have come primarily to look at objects, not to read reams of text (If one picks up all the A4s BKM has to offer, one will end up with a book's worth.) and in order to read the two full pages (front and back of A4), a chair would be handy but none are in sight.

More problematic is the A4 in light of *the reader-visitor's immediate context.* While reading, you come across the mention of a work. You want the immediate satisfaction of seeing it. You walk to the nearest picture, read the tombstone label to try to match it with the work title on the A4. But instead of finding the work mentioned in the text, you probably find something else. You can keep hunting or you can let the work before your eyes take precedence. In that case, you want to find out more about it, so you return to the A4 and hunt for mention of it. Maybe you find it, but the A4 does not offer much discussion of individual works. It takes some hunting to find the pertinent sentences, and in the mean time you read lots of other information that was not immediately relevant to the work you want to find out about. Frustration builds. You hunt around partitions and corners, along the walls. Much of what you do find is not mentioned specifically in the A4, but you must search through all the text to establish the fact. A likely consequence is that you will give up in frustration. 'The visitor's experience will not be complete or memorable if, once attracted to an object, their interest or questions…are not addressed by the label', says Serrell (1996:147). 'Without any references between what the words say and what visitors see, the label as a vacuum.' Visitors often graze, says Trench (2009:14), and if you do this with the Dahl A4, you will probably miss the big ideas around which the text and exhibition are structured.

How do the status-identity and art-historical frames and discourses interrelate?

In the Dahl case, the main subjects in the introductory wall text, the A4 and the Internet/annual program were *Dahl in art history* and the *status-identity of Dahl, BKM and Bergen.* It was impossible to disentangle the identity and status of these subjects because the identity and status of each one relied on the other subjects, in a network relationship. In the A4, Dahl's status-identity in art history was primary but BKM and Bergen's status-identity held a substantial position too. In the wall text, Dahl and BKM's status-identity shared equal billing, and in the Internet/annual program, BKM's status-identity was primary.

Looking at the A4's use of art history; analogous to how the 'genre hierarchy' ordered the painting genres, so also did art history have an ordering function. It presented the order of change. Dahl's history was presented diachronically, with milestones placed there where his geographical location changed. He changed, stage by stage, from lowly décor painter to professor and patriarch. The art historical discourse was also characterized by a network of concepts (interpretive frames) to which more subordinate concepts were tied: association, influence, geography, achievement and legacy. The frame of influence especially organized institutions and actors: Dahl chose his influences himself and influenced other people and institutions, including BKM.

But as mentioned, the status-identity discourse was interwoven with the art historical discourse. Dahl's status was enhanced through his having chosen high-status influences, so his status changed by association. In the wall text and Internet/annual program, mentioning him in a context of the prestigious artists Friedrich, Picasso and Klee enhanced his status-identity through association. The geographical linkage between Dahl, Bergen, Norway and Europe further strengthened and entrenched his status-identity, as did the mention of his achievements and on-going legacy.

Turning to BKM and Bergen's status; it was strengthened through the geographical positioning of Dahl in Bergen and his works in BKM. BKM's owner is a city that sees itself as an important art centre in Norway and in the European artworld. This claim is corroborated through its high-status possessions – works by 'world renowned artists'.

It would now be entirely fitting to wrap up this chapter by presenting what I deem to be the main discourses and the discourse order of the Dahl texts. I will not, however, gratify the reader with this just here, but defer it to chapter five. I instead press on to doing a comparative analysis using the V&A and Babel exhibition texts, to see whether the same means identified in the Dahl texts can also be found there.

4. Comparative Analysis

In this chapter I change the method somewhat. I use findings from the foregoing chapter to calibrate my toolbox for making comparisons between the Dahl texts and the texts for the V&A's exhibition *Turner, Constable and the Exhibitionary Landscape* and BKM's *Babel* exhibition. The reasons for changing methods were discussed in Chapter 2, but to reiterate the main points: firstly, through making comparisons, it should be possible to notice things otherwise hidden. Secondly, if the same means are used in more than one case, it could indicate hegemonic discourses, thus congruence across aims and agendas, across assumptions and identity-and status related issues, irrespective of the art being mediated. On the other hand, repeated usage does not necessarily indicate such congruence, so apparent similarities can be deceptive. I delimit the tools to *text genres*, *level of language* and *assumed reader*, *authority*, main *interpretive frames* and *discourses*. I enlist other tools from time to time, but they are subordinate to those I have italicized.

Part I of this chapter is devoted to the V&A's room 87: *Turner, Constable and the Exhibitionary Landscape.* It begins with a presentation of the primary-level text and an analysis of its main discourses. This is followed by the secondary-level text for room 87 and its analysis, which uses all the tools in the delimited toolbox. Analysis of the interpretive labels concludes Part I (see Appendixes 2-4 for floor plan, labels and analysis chart). Part II adheres to much the same structure and is devoted to the introductory room text and interpretive labels for *Babel* (see Appendixes 5-7 for floor plan, labels and analysis chart).

PART I: THE V&A EXHIBITION

Analysis of the primary and secondary level texts

The V&A texts, which were written for the rehanging of the paintings galleries in 2003, are hierarchically structured. One primary-level text is for all the paintings galleries; the secondary level consists of one wall text in each gallery room; the tertiary level consists of individual interpretive work labels.

> **The Paintings Galleries** (primary-level)
>
> §1. (1) The V&A has collected paintings since its foundation. (2) From 1857 until 1897 it was the home of the first national collection of British art. (3) Since the early

> 20th century, however, it has concentrated upon watercolours, portrait miniatures and paintings associated with design, architecture and the decorative arts.
> §2. (1) These galleries include two rooms hung in the dense arrangements that were customary until the early 20th century. (2) The other three rooms are contemporary in character and present a range of media, from the watercolour to the oil sketch and the full-scale landscape painting. (3) Many British and European paintings are displayed in other galleries of the V&A, and many more may be seen by arrangement in the Print Room.

This text has one strong similarity with the Dahl introductory wall text: a *status discourse* is interwoven with an *identity discourse*. Like BKM, the V&A asserts its status and identity based on the nature and pedigree of its holdings and their importance for national and international heritage. Something similar to BKM's claim of 'large and significant' is implied by 'collected paintings since its foundation'. If this is the case, the paintings collection would presumably be significant, if not large. Further, it is 'home to the first national collection of British art', which suggests it can, like BKM, offer 'a unique overview' of the period in British painting which parallels that of the 'Dresden period in Norwegian art history'. In 'home to the first national collection of British art', one hears the echo of status claims voiced in the 1989 House of Lords debate on the V&A's restructuring; there the former chairman of the V&A trustees, Lord Carrington, called the V&A 'one of the world's greatest museums and I dare to say that of its kind it is the greatest'. Lord Hutchinson called it 'the greatest museum of decorative and fine art and design in the world'. He quoted the Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC), who describes the V&A as reflecting 'the nation's place in the history of civilisation' (House of Lords debate 1989). If the lords and the MGC argue for such status and identity, then the V&A surely feels warranted in seeing itself as contributing to culture on wider national and international levels, as does BKM. However, the comparability of the Dahl wall text and the V&A paintings gallery text breaks down in the latter's §2, since it contains a *design discourse* (discussed below).

Entering Room 87, one finds the following wall text:

> **Constable, Turner and the Exhibition Landscape, Room 87** (secondary level)
> §1. (1) In 1719 a critic claimed that landscape paintings 'cannot Improve the Mind'. (2) This view that landscape was inferior to mythological or religious subjects

prevailed until the wars with France at the end of the century. (3) Landscape painting then began to play a major role in the formation of a distinctly British cultural identity. (4) By 1836 John Constable was able to state: 'The art of painting may be divided into two main branches, history and landscape…Landscape is the child of history'.
§2. (1) Painters specialised in many different types of landscape. (2) Constable concentrated on the Suffolk scenery he knew best, while Turner travelled widely and emphasised dramatic effects. (3) Others sought inspiration from the old masters, or from exotic or literary subjects. (4) By the 1850s, John Ruskin was arguing that the natural world provided the noblest subject of all.
§3. (1) Ruskin criticised dense picture displays. (2) In this gallery the pictures are hung in the sparse arrangement that is usual today.

Discourses. This text contains the same discourses as the foregoing. The *status discourse* comes across differently here than in the V&A primary-level text and in BKM's wall text. In the latter, Dahl was treated as 'one of the most important'. But here, by contrast, Turner and Constable are but two examples of artists who specialized in certain types of landscape painting. Constable has a status-giving and authoritative voice insofar as his pronouncement on landscape painting's status is quoted, but there is no mention of Turner and Constable being 'some of the best known' or 'most important'. They are instead presented rather as part of a community of artists who compete for status. This theme of 'competition for status' is most obvious in the V&A's webpage for room 87, which repeats and strengthens the message of the room text: 'In this room major landscape paintings by Constable are exhibited beside works by his competitor Turner and their contemporaries, including James de Loutherbourg, Peter De Wint, Francis Danby and James Ward.'[40] The status of landscape painting, however, rises in similar fashion to Dahl's status. This is seen when analysing the text genres. More can be said about the status of landscape painting when analysing the text genres.

Text genres. The room text's first paragraph is organized as a *narrative* beginning with a topic sentence. This puts the story in a particular time-frame, introducing the main character 'landscape painting', and its problem: it has inferior status because it cannot improve the mind. Similar to Dahl in the A4, landscape painting sets out on a journey of upward mobility. It overcomes its problem and its story is resolved in the last line of §2: landscape painting has

[40] http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/r/constable-turner-landscape-room-87/ [24 November 2012]

become the noblest genre because ‘the natural world provided the noblest subject of all’. The mechanism for changing status is in §1.3, but it curiously ignores the criteria of mind improvement: the landscape is linked with ‘the formation of a distinctly British cultural identity’. (The British may already have perceived themselves as having a cultural identity, but as far as one can tell from the room text, up to the nineteenth century that identity was not expressly linked to the landscape.) §1 ends with the quoted authority Constable, who describes the landscape painting’s place in the genre hierarchy with the family tree metaphor: history painting (which can improve the mind) is the parent (high status), and it has given birth to a child, landscape painting. Naturally the child has lower status, but through the familial relation, the child is the heir. The ‘main branches’ metaphor acknowledges other genres, but now mythological and religious paintings are implicated as minor branches. Accordingly, halfway through the room text, landscape painting has moved from low to medium status with the potential for more, since the child’s prospect is to gain legal majority.

§2 also begins with a narrative topical sentence, this time to signal a shift in text genre: ‘Painters specialised in many different types of landscape’ alerts readers to prepare for a taxonomical, classifying passage. Remarkable here, and in contrast to the Dahl A4, is that artists’ practices are described through ‘doing’ verbs – specialized, concentrated, travelled, emphasised, sought – rather than inert state-of-being or having verbs or classifying phrases such as ‘such as’ and ‘as seen in’, which prevailed in the A4. The *explanation* genre’s action verbs intertwine with the more general *report*, flowing smoothly in the narrative’s wake and stimulating reader interest. The phrase ‘by the 1850s’ signals a return to the narrative and its resolution. Thus the end of §2 ‘shakes hands’ with the start of §1 and the repetition of the genre hierarchy theme lingers and is reinforced in the mind.

The report genre returns in §3 with the new theme of ‘picture display’ (design discourse). Here also there is a smooth transition. First, a spatial breather is created by starting the new paragraph. By convention, this signals a change of theme. Secondly, there is carry-over in ‘Ruskin criticised’. Had the sentence begun with ‘Dense picture displays’ rather than ‘Ruskin’, readers might feel befuddled. The author thus follows standard stylistic advice to repeat the known information at the sentence head and to introduce new information at the tail. Thirdly, the past tense ‘criticized’ keeps the level of action on par with §2. Sentence 3.2 presents the only instance of the present-tense state-of-being verb ‘are’, which is traditional for classifying reports: ‘In this gallery the pictures are hung in the sparse arrangement that is usual today.’ ‘This’ acknowledges that readers are standing in the gallery, and for the first time one senses the need to stand in Room 87 to benefit from reading the text. One is

encouraged to mentally step back from the story of 'upward mobility' and reflect analytically on room design. Why this is the final sentence is presumably so that it will link to the primary-level text's design theme, which explains that two rooms are hung in 'dense arrangements' customary for the early twentieth century, while the other rooms are hung in a contemporary mode. Thus the room text is linked to a super-ordinate text panel three rooms removed. The room text's last paragraph repeats the theme of *design* – not status. This is noteworthy given that Mark Jones, V&A director when the *Turner, Constable and the Exhibition Landscape* room was mounted, expressly stated that the V&A was '[…]not an art gallery' but a museum for 'design in all its forms'.[41]

From the above, it seems that the narrative is the most dominant text genre, as it was in the Dahl A4. It starts off the text and engages readers' interest – everyone likes stories. The action verbs behave largely like a narrative, tricking readers to imagine they are still reading a story while being fed reports and explanations.

Level of language and the implied reader. The V&A room text is similar to the Dahl A4 in that it focuses on the same ideas of genre hierarchy and painting genres, but with a striking difference: its language is geared towards elementary and early-intermediate readers rather than upper-intermediate and high-proficiency readers (see Table 2, p. 28). 'Genre hierarchy' is themed throughout §1 and 2 but with the metaphor of the parent-child relation. Elementary-level readers can understand the difference in status based on their own family experience. 'Genre hierarchy' is further elaborated through a story –patterned on a traditional folktale – of landscape painting's problem and how it is resolved. Whereas the Dahl A4's list of painting genres included the possibly confusing 'tableaux', 'stencil' and 'history' genres, the V&A text limits the list to mythology, religious, history and landscape, with the latter divided into sub-genres introduced with the frame of *influence and inspiration*: Constable was influenced by *local* landscapes, Turner by the *dramatic*, 'others' were inspired by *Old Masters*, *exotic* landscapes and *literary*-based scenery. The sub-divisions are repeated in the tertiary-level texts. Also noteworthy is the ability of 'others sought inspiration' to convey that Turner and Constable worked in a milieu of artists who exercised influence and competed with each other. The aspect of actively seeking inspiration draws a parallel to the way Dahl was presented as an active seeker of influences.

[41] Mark Jones (director 2001-10) endured criticism for pandering to mainstream culture when the V&A presented *Kylie Minogue: Image of a Pop Star* (2007). Responding to critics, he said, 'We are a museum for design in all its forms. The V&A is not an art gallery. It is a museum of contemporary and historic design'. http://www.smh.com.au/news/arts/right-little-trouper/2007/02/07/1170524163929.html [18 Oct. 2012]

The elementary language level also surfaces when reading about landscape painting's problem – it 'cannot improve the mind' (§1.1) – and the problem's resolution when leading critic John Ruskin judges landscape to be the 'noblest subject of all' (§2.4). One recalls H.C. Andersen's fairytale *The Ugly Duckling*. 'Noblest subject of all' is easier to understand than the A4's 'character ennobling function' (*karakterforedlende virksomhet*). By focusing on the idea of a painting being able to improve the mind, it is conceivable that viewers can understand the improving of one's mind as leading to improving one's character.[42]

A third instance of simplified language is 'the wars with France at the end of the century' (§1.3). This avoids the shorter phrase 'Napoleonic wars', perhaps because a wider readership – including Americans – may not be able to place Napoleon in the right epoch. The passage also avoids presenting more than one date, since doing so can clutter the mind and detract from the main theme. '1719' at the text's top is presumably there for three reasons: first, through visitor research prior to the exhibition's mounting, the V&A found that more than 65 percent of visitors to the paintings galleries wanted dates presented at the top of texts.[43] Second, the number date rather than the century is more quickly cognized; many readers struggle to realize that 'eighteenth century' is not the 1800s. Third, the number enables brevity: 'in 1719' versus 'in the early years of the eighteenth century'. The V&A prescribes a maximum word count of 130-150 for room texts (Trench 2009:8).

From the language, one can deduce that the implied reader is neither an art historian nor a high-proficiency English user. Why this is the case undoubtedly relates, again, to visitor research in 2003. The V&A found that over half the respondents were unsure of concepts such as 'progressive' and 'polychrome', 46 percent were unfamiliar with the 'Royal Academy' (its nineteenth-century manifestation), and 61 percent did not understand 'Barbizon school' (V&A 2003:5-7). This is despite 50 percent of respondents having at least a Bachelor's degree (V&A 2003:13, 18-19). The same respondents expressed greater understanding of 'Old Master', 'Mythological', 'Classical' and 'Realism'. The concluding recommendations from the study state that it would be 'prudent to allow definitions for all terms anyway, particularly as the museum is an education/study tool for many schools and colleges' (V&A 2003:30).

[42] Today' visitors may not make the connection to St. Paul's admonition: 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind' (Romans 12:2). But there is research to suggest that a 19th cen. viewer would make the connection. See Timothy Larsen (2011) *A People of One Book: The Bible and the Victorians*. Oxford University Press.
[43] http://media.vam.ac.uk/media/website/uploads/documents/legacy_documents/file_upload/5859_file.pdf [17 Sep. 2012]

Thus far the Dahl and V&A texts do show points of comparability with respect to the inclusion of the status discourse, even though it is expressed differently. There are also similarities in the text genres and the deployment and discussion of genre hierarchy. The areas of striking difference are in the V&A's focus on design, its consistent use of simpler language and assumption of an early-intermediate reader. I now turn to the interpretive labels to explore other areas of similarity and difference.

V&A interpretive labels analysis

Appendix 2 presents the floor plan of Room 87, Appendix 3 contains the labels here discussed, and an analysis chart for these labels is in Table 3 in Appendix 4. When visiting Room 87, I found a booklet with enlarged texts for the sight impaired. It suggested that visitors first read the room panel to the left of the main doorway, then move clock-wise, looking at one work on Wall A, then to Walls B, C and D, only then returning to finish viewing wall A. Following this rout, the order is: 1. Peter De Wint (1 work); 2. John Crome (1wk); 3. James Ward (1wk); 4. De Wint (1wk); 5. Francis Danby (1wk); 6-9. J.M.W. Turner (4wks); 10. P.J. de Loutherbourg (1wk); 11. J.J. Chalon (1wk); 12-17. John Constable (6wks). There was no stipulated 'order of seeing' in the Dahl gallery.

Text genres. It is possible to identify patterns in how the text genres are mixed. In the 17 labels, no text genre entirely dominates, and in most cases there is a mixture of three. One pattern is *narrative>report>exposition*. In this case the labels begin with biography but soon switches to a report of the motif using evocative language about the English landscape, then ends with an exposition presenting a critic's appraisal. Take De Wint's *A Cornfield* (no. 1): sentence 1 is biography and in sentence 2, 'naturalistic landscapes' signals a classifying report. This soon gives way to an exposition written with the voice of a critic – this work is considered De Wint's masterpiece. The exposition continues in sentence 3, being interwoven with a report extoling the English landscape and perpetuating the tone of praise. A second pattern is *report>explanation>exposition*, as exemplified in the text for Turner's *East Cowes Castle* (no. 9). It starts with a *report* on social history, follows up with an *explanation* of how the work was made, then ends with an *exposition* of a critic's praise. But how do the text genres compare with those in the Dahl texts?

In the Dahl A4, a narrative, chronological biography was the 'background colour' into which the other text genres were woven. In the V&A labels, artists' biographies only appear for artists of international origin and for Constable. Yet even for Constable, the biography is

not sustained and comes only in snippets. Why it is included in five out of six labels is presumably on account of his position as that artist who, like Dahl, was most influential in teaching his countrymen how to see their landscape.[44] Also conceivable is that the inclusion is a response to research conducted prior to the current hanging.[45] Furthermore, his biographical details seem so ordinary that he is easy to relate to.

The report genre, often signalled by 'this', is the most frequent text genre in the V&A labels (13 out of 17), being used to point to motifs (this composition derives from, this shows, this is, this view dates from, this view depicts, this portrays, this painting depicts). By contrast, the Dahl A4 used 'this' mostly to point to abstract concepts and only once to point to a motif: 'this typically Nordic tree' for *Birch Tree in a Storm*. Thus a marked difference is that the V&A labels are truly meant to be read while standing before the works.

The exposition genre is in eight of the 17 labels and often used to quote a critic's praise (nos. 1, 4, 8, 9, 13). The praise usually comes at the end of the paragraph or in the penultimate sentence, leaving readers with a lingering sense of approbation. Five labels quote negative criticism, and again, it is usually at the end. While a critic's voice was never heard in the Dahl texts, its use in the V&A labels invites closer scrutiny because it casts light on the way in which the National Romantic discourse is represented in the texts for both exhibitions.

The interpretive frame of the critic's voice. Criticism (positive and negative) is integral to the V&A paintings being classified as 'exhibition landscapes'; they were painted with the intention of being criticized by a jury and if successful, being included in status-bearing shows such as at the Royal Academy. This is why 'exhibition' is in room title. The critic's voice was not in the Dahl A4, and the exclusion reflects major differences between the early nineteenth-century British and Norwegian art scenes: Norway had no equivalent to the Royal Academy. One is hard pressed to name a Norwegian art critic from that era. Britain had the most tone-setting critic John Ruskin (mentioned four times). In Table 3 (Appendix 4) I classified this interpretive frame under the art historical discourse because it is integrated in the artworld as part of the social history of art, but it is perhaps better categorized as a social historical frame since it points to what then-contemporary voices said about the art.

[44] This view was presented by an educator at Tate Britain, in his guided tour of that institution's Turner-Constable wing in the fall of 2011.

[45] In the 2003 study, respondents said they were most of all interested in Constable. Of the interpretive frames listed on the schema, 'the artists themselves' was deemed most interesting, outranking 'artist training and influences, contemporary artists' responses to historic paintings, Victorian collections, the history of the V&A painting collection, historic paintings, historic methods of displaying paintings, historical/political context, social issues around artist/subject, landscape painting, genre painting and techniques of painting' (V&A 2003:5).

Why has the author so often used a dead critic's voice to point to the motif, to say how one feels while in the act of viewing and to judge a work's qualities and the artist's skill? Readers generally presuppose art critics to be experts, so one might assume authority to be conveyed through their statements. If so, the authoritative voice would be less that of an art historian, as in the Dahl A4, and would be transferred to 'a critic' or Ruskin. Label no. 16, however, features an art historian's voice offering positive criticism – 'fresh and atmospheric' – which neutralize the negative criticism 'nasty green thing'. Label no. 10's art historian counteracts the critic's derisive 'soap-suds' by stating that the 'critic mistook the scene'.

Accordingly, the author's authority outranks that of the critic – his is a voice from the past and not necessarily authoritative today. But the dead critic's voice is handy because there may be sentiments the author would like to express but which he or she might fear to commit to paper today. An example is the judgement of beauty, as in 'a beautiful marine piece' (no. 9). Being mindful of living after Modernism and Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs de mal* (1857), it seems more relevant to judge an artwork abject, dystopian or ambiguous than to judge it beautiful. The quoting can thus be a Postmodern device allowing one to say something one might otherwise feel restricted from saying for fear of sounding banal. Other examples of possibly banal language are the grandiloquent 'one of the highest pieces of intellectual art existing' (no. 9) and pathos-imbued phrases like 'wilderness of light' (no. 11). This latter instance expresses Nature Romanticism. So by including the dead critic's voice, the sentiments that were part of the then-contemporary artworld now appear as history; former viewers' feelings about the works pose a challenge to today's viewers to re-enact the feeling through quotation. In sum, the dead critic can be used in at least four ways: to exert authority, to say something otherwise unsayable, to mark distance to today's artworld, and to spark viewer participation through quoting the feelings of bygone Nature Romanticism.

Curious is the less-than-subtle connection between *negative criticism* and *all things foreign*. It did not arise in the Dahl texts at all. Here it concerns the poor skill of two artists of non-British background (Loutherbourg, 'soap suds', no. 10; Challon, water looks like 'brass or lead', no. 11), and Ward's motif (no. 3), which apparently is poorly copied from the non-British painter Rubens, and Danby's motif (no. 5) from Java. While this latter work is not subject to negative criticism, it triggers foreboding or disquiet through the mention of condemned criminals, poison and effluvia leading to depopulation. By contrast, Turner is subjected only to one case of mild criticism ('unsubstantial', no. 6) and in the case of the ridicule Constable suffered ('nasty green thing', no. 16), readers are enjoined to feel sorry for him, to think him mistreated by the critic, because the author starts out with an objective-

sounding report using the positive adjectives ‘fresh and atmospheric’. Hence it is not Constable but the critic whom readers are enjoined to criticise.

Discourses. I have already intimated how the *status discourse* in the V&A labels pertains to the paintings rather than the museum, being historicized through the judgements of dead critics. It also comes to expression through the ‘tombstone’ information about the works being exhibited in juried shows, especially at the Royal Academy. This sort of status is however less relevant for the works’ present status, for that has more to do with their ability, jointly, to represent a period in the history of British painting, and to be part of the great British cultural patrimony which the V&A owns. In this latter respect there is a strong comparability with the Dahl wall text, through emphasis on the collection’s ability to represent the Dresden period of Norwegian landscape painting. So since I have already spoken at length about the status discourse, I press on to look at the *social-cultural* discourse and the discourses on *art history* and the *British landscape*.

As stated, the critic’s voice reflects the social history of art because it points to what the artist’s contemporaries say. But the wider category of *social-cultural* discourse seems most apparent in the Turner labels that mention the Manby apparatus and fishing with a baited line hook (nos. 7, 8). In the other labels social-cultural history stands as a taken-for-granted backdrop, through the mere mention of boat building, barges, churches and so forth. In the Dahl texts, the dominant art historical discourse pointed beyond itself to the wider culture, but only insofar as it related to Bergen’s understanding of its status, and in terms of how Dahl affected Norwegian cultural heritage and national identity. In the V&A labels, by comparison, there is no direct mention of an individual artist’s works intertwining the landscape with British social identity. What one finds instead is the cultural landscape more generally described in romantic terms (as will soon be illuminated).

Features commonly found in *art historical* discourse appear in all the V&A labels except no. 7. They almost always start with the artist’s name or ‘This’ to point directly to what viewers see. The standard art historical interpretive frames – artist’s bio, the creative process, sources of inspiration, what the work is based on, art theory, what we see, quoting criticism – are chopped into small bites. Those frames that could apply to several works are similarly treated and require readers to have the presence of mind to relativize the contents of one label and apply it to other works ‘down line’. To explain: in label no. 1, De Wint is spoken of as an important source of inspiration for Constable, thus this label and work are relatable to the down-line Constable works. Label no. 2 is the only one to mention a theory of art, and since

Crome is ‘a leading master’ and some of his dictums are quoted, it is conceivable that several artists represented in the room are in some way beholden to him. Label no. 3 mentions the direct observation of nature, a tenet for Romantic landscape painting in general, and label no. 4 mentions idealization, which is fundamental to Nature Romanticism. Thus, by reading the first four labels in the intended order, one comes across information applicable to other works in the room. Yet it is uncertain whether readers have the presence of mind to make the application. This constitutes a problem, and it comes from the label format not allowing for sustained treatment. This was less of a problem in the A4.

I am struck by the gushing quality of *British landscape* discourse. Table 4 (below) shows how, for every British motif, nouns or adjectives evoke grandiloquence, a homespun (rustic) connection to the landscape, or a solidly Romantic theme one would expect to find in a gothic English novel by the Bronté sisters or George McDonald.

Table 4. Presentation of the British landscape

Artist	Grandiloquence	Rustic, homespun	Traditional Romantic
1. De Wint	Champagne, glowing gold	noon-day sun, cornfield	
2. Crome	One grand plan of light and shade		
3. Ward	Perfection		Castle
4. De Wint		Makes me feel as if I were walking though fields	
5. Danby Does not apply			
6. Turner		St. Michael’s Mount, Cornwall	Medieval monastery
7. Turner			Shipwreck / stranded vessel
8. Turner		Inshore fishermen, line fishing, Hastings, English Channel	
9. Turner	One of the highest pieces of intellectual art existing	Isle of Wight, regatta (boat race)	Castle
10. Loutherbourg Does not apply			
11. Challon	Wilderness of light		Foreboding… approach of storms
12. Constable		Mill, sluice and lock gate	Church tower
13. Constable	Atmospheric truth, tremulous vibration of the heated air…	Barge, dry dock, open air, boat building	
14. Constable		Trees, field and hedgerow	Church spire, graveyard
15. Constable		Village, Hampstead, Highgate	Panoramic views
16. Constable		Fresh and atmospheric view, home, closest friend	Cathedral Canon of cathedral
17. Constable		..a shower, flitting clouds, flickering lights and shades over the country	

The descriptions in Table 4 reflect and redouble an emotional connection to the British landscape and marinescape. The citing of unremarkable locations (a mill, a field) and mundane activities (boat building, fishing) and work titles (*Haymaking, A Cornfield*) are juxtaposed with champagne, glowing gold and a wilderness of light, and set in the context of castles, medieval monasteries, stranded vessels and a graveyard. In this way, the quotidian

landscape is invested with a character endearing it to readers. By the time one reads the last label, one is hard pressed not to accept the idealizations.

This is different from the way the A4 author treated the Norwegian landscape. To be sure, the A4 mentioned local landscapes such as Stedje in Sogn, and mundane activities like cutting timber at a water-powered sawmill, but it refrained from building warm emotional synergy. The most evocative fragment is in §9: 'steep mountain precipices, swirling rapids and dense, dark forests. There is potential drama everywhere, even in the sky, which is coloured by an impending storm. People are present in the landscape but they are small and insignificant…' There is nothing here to endear the landscape to readers. It is described as sublime and terrifying. A clause about *Birch Tree in a Storm* is similarly awe-inspiring: 'tenaciously clinging to its mountain shelf and withstanding the storm', and this is followed up with 'battle', another 'storm' and 'barren soil'. So while the V&A labels encourage readers to love the landscape, to bask in its glowing gold and champagne, the A4 strikes awe and fear. I would not have noticed this without making comparisons between the two cases.

It would be interesting now to present the main findings as regards similarities and differences between the Dahl and V&A texts, but I wait to do so until Chapter 5 so that I can present the Dahl and V&A findings in combination with those from BKM's Babel exhibition.

PART II. BKM's *BABEL* EXHIBITION

Upon entering a white cube (see Appendix 5, p. 116 for floor plan), one finds, on the wall beside the door, the following text:

> BABEL: CONTEMPORARY ART FROM THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION
> §1. For the time being, this part of Stenersen is dedicated to Bergen Art Museum's own holdings of contemporary art. This gives us the opportunity to present more of our collection. Since the 1990s we have acquired many important works, so using this space to showcase them signals the importance we place on having a continuous acquisition policy. Most of the featured works are from the last decade and are created by both Norwegian and international artists.
>
> §2. The museum does not want its presentation of contemporary art to be static; instead, the new works can be mounted according to a variety of thematic approaches and presentational modes. In this exhibition some rooms are organized according to a

theme and other rooms are organized according to aesthetic criteria. We do not, however, want to force the public into perceiving specific themes or readings. As a visitor, you are free to try to decode our choices, but it is nevertheless your encounter with the art that is important.

§3. We have called this first exhibition BABEL. The reference to the biblical 'Tower of Babel' is not meant to express confusion but to emphasize that today's art consists of very different artistic languages and dialects. Art has always been like this, but pluralism and the artworld's acceptance of a wide range of expressions have, over the last three decades, had an increasing impact.

§4. The Tower of Babel was said to have been in Babylonia, the hub of political power in ancient Mesopotamia. Over the last century art has had several power-centres: Paris, New York, London and Berlin. Yet due to increasing globalization since the late 1980s, and changes in international economics, several new challengers appear on the horizon. China, India and Japan have also distinguished themselves as 'art nations'. Airfare deregulation and the last twenty years' revolution in communication technology mean that the large cultural centres are now less important for artistic production. Interesting art can emerge anywhere. It can be created in Bergen, Reykjavik and Malmö as easily as in Amsterdam, Shanghai or New Delhi. Thus the dynamics and dialogues between periphery and centre, between international and local contexts (geographically speaking) are both exciting and challenging.

Erlend G. Høyersten, Director
Eli Okkenhaug, Senior Curator

Text genres. Babel presents art *so* different from National Romantic landscape painting, one would be forgiven for presupposing that its text genres are also very different. But when analysing the text genres, one realizes that the report genre is dominant, just as it was in the Dahl wall text. The reports classify what readers are about to experience and explanations tell why and how the exhibition is set up as it is. There is also a less obvious instance of an instruction. The reports, as usual, are marked by verbs of being and having (is, are, consists of, have always been, has had, was, etc.), while the explanations are marked by verbs signifying processes or actions (gives, present, acquire, signal, mount, are (organized), called, express, emphasize, appear, distinguish, mean, emerge, and create). But over and above the initial tasks, what do the reports and explanations indicate?

Starting with the first report in §1, its initial task is to situate the exhibitionary event in a temporal setting and inform readers of what they are about to experience: 'BKM's own holdings of contemporary art', but this phrase heralds that a discourse on identity and status is

at hand. The holdings are presented in ‘this part of Stenersen’ and ‘this space’, demonstrating that the authors acknowledge the readers’ presence in the room. The situating tool ‘this’ was seldom used in the Dahl A4 but was often used in the V&A labels.

Before the first report gets very far, the text switches to the explanation genre to account for why BKM is using Stenersen to show its own possessions (rather than a temporary exhibition, which is what the space was formerly used for). Initially, then, BKM’s ‘own holdings’ and ‘continuous acquisition policy’ are the reason for the exhibition.

With the explanation comes a shift from the non-personal ‘Bergen Art Museum’ to ‘us’ and ‘we’. In later paragraphs the pronouns again give way to ‘the museum’, then return to ‘we’. ‘The public’ likewise becomes ‘you’. Such alternation also exists in the Norwegian version but to a lesser extent. On a practical level, pronouns help reduce the word count, but on a more symbolic level, they enable a more frank and personal tone reflecting that the museum is partly comprised of flesh-and-blood actors. Exactly who ‘we’ are is clarified at the end of the text, for the curator and director append their names and take up-front responsibility for their work. Thus the text seems to be ‘the product of distinct authors’ voices, not an anonymous institutional proclamation’ (Wood 2004:110).

§2 mixes explanations and reports to account for exhibition design. This may initially seem comparable to the V&A’s focus (in the primary- and secondary-level text) on exhibition design but it is not actually, since BKM does not perceive itself as a design museum. Rather, the authors are taking readers ‘behind the scenes’ to see some of what has gone into creating the exhibition, divulging that diverse themes, presentational modes and aesthetic criteria are used to organize the works. This is a reader-empowering device, for it gives insight into normally hidden aspects. But it comes with a warning: since there is no unifying theme, readers need to exert themselves to make their experience cohere.

§2 says ‘you are free to decode our choices, but it is nevertheless your encounter with the art that is important’. Even though this reports on a state of affairs, the reporting cloaks an imperative instruction: Encounter the art yourself, take charge of your experience, don’t be passive. Some implications of this will emerge when discussing ‘authority’ (below).

§3 and 4 continue the mixed-genre mode, now to state why the exhibition is called Babel, to introduce the theme ‘pluralism in the artworld’, and a constellation of concepts: periphery, centre, globalization and the conditions for pluralism. The theme of pluralism and its attendant concepts set the conditions for the status discourse, as shall soon be explained.

Main discourses. Babel's wall text contains two main types of discourses. The first to appear concerns *museum-internal* matters: BKM's holdings, its acquisition policy, which part of the museum is used for what, and the selecting and organizing of works for the exhibition. These discourses are, however, subordinate to the second type of discourse – on status – and it concerns the status of BKM and the city of Bergen. The status discourse is far more pronounced in the Babel wall text than in the Dahl texts as a whole.

§1 emphasizes the many important works in BKM's holdings of contemporary art. The importance justifies the decision to present them in a space previously earmarked for temporary exhibitions of works loaned in from elsewhere. Thus the recent history of a museum-internal matter probably accounts for why the phrase 'this part of Stenersen is dedicated' is in the first sentence. The fact of having important contemporary works is closely related to BKM's acquisition policy, another internal matter. This policy is crucial since, without it, BKM's collection would presumably be miscellaneous or consist largely of random gifts. Without a consistent, deliberate plan for collecting, BKM can hardly boast – as it did in the Dahl wall text – to be able to 'give a unique overview' of a period in art history. The acquisition policy is thus a precondition for the museum's status in the contemporary artworld. BKM's ambition is to become an important museum for Norwegian and international contemporary art. If this can be achieved, BKM will have drawing power and Bergen can enhance its status as an 'art city', of which §4 gives several examples. Further, BKM will contribute importantly to Norway's status as an 'art nation', comparable to the emerging art nations China, India and Japan. This far exceeds the assumption implicit in the Dahl wall text, of BKM being comparable to a German art museum.

§2 dwells on the museum-internal matter of how the exhibition is mounted, and, as already suggested, this intersects with the status discourse. The museum-internal discourse is less important because it is 'buried' in the text; it is not the first thing the readers think about, nor the last thought lingering in the mind. In §2 the possibility of a plurality of approaches to mounting the exhibition leads into §3's theme of pluralism – the acceptance of a range of artistic expressions. This is another precondition for Bergen and BKM being an important hub in the artworld. The plausibility argument is that it is conceivable that peripheral expressions can be *as* important as those emanating from the artworld's traditional centres.

In §4, the status of Bergen, owner of BKM, is the issue. As in the Dahl wall text, a shift in verb tense signals a shift from the artworld's old power hubs to current power hubs and the 'dialogues between periphery and centre, between international and local contexts'. This time, though, the verbs do not shift from past to present tense, but from past to future-conditional

tense (‘can emerge’, ‘can be created’). So one might assume that the authors recognize Bergen and BKM may not as yet constitute an important hub for contemporary artistic production, but that it is logical, even reasonable, to think it possible. The condition of possibility is globalization, more specifically the downgrading of traditional power centres through communication technology, airfare deregulation and changes in international economics. More likely, however, is that while one reads down through this introductory text, the cumulative impact renders the future-conditional tense to an implied present tense. One reads BKM’s self-presentation as a staging within the very artworld the wall text describes. Rather than Bergen having the possibility of reaching the level of Paris and New York someday in the future, one reads the text as though this has already happened: Bergen *is* like Paris and New York. Even though the authors do not actually present the non sequitur ‘if exciting art can be created anywhere, then Bergen is an exciting art city’, it is implied, and through the implication, the museum awards itself status.

Authority. Two types of authority can be detected in the text: that of the curators and the reader-visitors. Through the decision to equate ‘babel’ with ‘plurality’, the curators give themselves the authority of artists. To explain; just as the artworks express a plurality of themes, so also does their mode of arrangement. This causes the exhibition to behave as a contemporary artwork, and its creators, the curators, to behave as artists. This art-likeness and artist-likeness is enabled in §3: ‘…today’s art consists of very different artistic languages and dialects. Art has always been like this, but pluralism and the artworld’s acceptance of a wide range of expressions have, over the last three decades, had an increasing impact.’ So the curators take advantage of that acceptance to themselves create a pluralistic exhibition. Their own proximity to the artworld they mediate aids them in achieving artist authority. This was not possible for the Dahl curator and author because they could not so easily present themselves as Romantics. They could not say, ‘Dahl and us—we are the same’. The V&A author skirted the issue by quoting Romantic critics. But the Babel curators can say it because they belong to the same contemporary artworld.

Reader-visitors gain authority because they are taken ‘back-stage’ to learn about the exhibition organization. Traditionally, the cloud of ignorance about this gives organizers immediate authority over visitors because the organizers know the exhibition’s structure and intended messages that will, at least on some level, render it meaningful. The Babel curators break down that traditional authority by admitting the lack of any overriding theme – other than plurality. A second sign of a breakdown in traditionally authority is in the ‘cloaked

imperative'. If readers become actively involved, they will become, in part, the authors and thus authorities of their own experience.

The use of 'your' in §3 is a key to how a viewer's authority is generated. The possessive pronoun recalls Olafur Eliasson's work titles, which always include 'your'.[46] Eliasson does this to stress that viewers need to become active participants in his works. How this happens is through 'Your Engagement Sequence' (YES) (Eliasson 2009). It 'attunes our attention', he says. When experiencing an artwork, one adds YES in order to relate to the artwork in the spatio-temporal situation, to co-produce, use and individualize it. By treating YES as a core aspect of perception, viewers become responsible for their relationship to the situation: 'engagement has consequences and these entail a heightened feeling of responsibility' (Eliasson 2009:§5-6). This focus on responsibility reveals engagement with art to have an ethical dimension. It presupposes that experiences with art are either exemplary for, or parallel to, aesthetic experiences in general life.[47]

The level of language and the implied reader. The wall text's language is not particularly advanced. Readers are expected to have minimal familiarity with the Bible story about the Tower of Babel and to have a general grasp of geography (a primary-school-level subject). Along with elementary-level concepts, there is a marked attempt towards informality, with the transitions from 'Bergen Art Museum' to 'us' and 'we', and from 'the public' to 'you' and 'your'. These transitions underscore the afore-mentioned breakdown of authorial authority and are plausibly appealing to a broad audience. The wall text therefore seems pitched to the same group of readers as the V&A texts.

One factor suggests that the wall text is not targeting a wide readership: its length. In this respect it shares similarity with the Dahl A4. It has 369 words (Dahl wall text 84 words; V&A wall text 163 words; Dahl A4 1,258 words). Verbosity can easily be a turn-off, says label-researcher Beverly Serrell; texts that 'look too long discourage, overwhelm, and frustrate readers' (Serrell 1996:85; cf. Trench 2009:8). Serrell cites researchers who find that 'Most visitors, given a choice, will choose to read labels that look easier, are shorter, and have larger print' (Serrell 1996:100). So the presumed broad audience narrows, and the likelihood of losing reader interest is compounded by there being nowhere to sit.

[46] Recent works are *Your Light Movement* (2012), *Your Rainbow Panorama* (2011), *Your Blind Movement* (2010) and *Your Making Things Explicit* (2009).

[47] Morten Kyndrup summarizes how, parallel to nineteenth-century German Romanticism, 'the modern subject' emerged alongside 'a particular type of sensory experience that is combined with a special reflexive relation to that experience'. With this, aesthetic philosophy fused with the philosophy of art and the aesthetic experiences of art came to be understood as exemplary for aesthetic experience in general (Kyndrup 2012:25-26).

Analysis of Babel labels

Appendix 6 contains the text of the Babel labels and Appendix 7 contains an analysis chart. When Babel opened in 2010, interpretive labels for works by approximately 30 artists were prepared. Revisiting the exhibition in both 2011 and 2012, it was clear that this 'permanent' exhibition undergoes change; some rooms have been closed off and some works in the remaining rooms have been switched with new works. Meanwhile, the more 'famous' artists (e.g., Leonard Rickhard, Bjarne Melgaard) seem always to be represented. I restrict my analysis and discussion to the 18 labels that could be read in the two gallery rooms open in 2011 (on this visit three rooms were closed off), plus three additional labels for works which were not on show at that time, but which represent themes otherwise missing from the two rooms. There is no prescribed order of viewing and one can wander in an assortment of directions, hence I order the labels according to those closest to the main doorway, then those further afield: 1. Marius Engh; 2. Steinar Jakobsen; 3. Mary Jo Lafontaine; 4. Ole Martin Lunde Bø; 5. Alexander Tokarev; 6. Leonard Rickhard; 7. Matias Faldbakken; 8. Bjørn Bjarre; 9. Pushwagner; 10. Takashi Murakami; 11. Hilmar Fredriksen; 12. Steinar Elstrøm; 13. Bjarne Melgaard; 14. Michael Elmgreen & Ingar Dragset; 15. Jonas Kvie; 16. Per Barclay; 17. Thomas Pihl; 18. Tom Sandberg. Some artists are represented with several works, others with only one, but there is only one label per artist.

There are many more devices in the Babel labels than in the Dahl A4 and V&A labels. Some are used only once or twice while others appear in almost every label. All the columns in Table 5, (Appendix 7, p. 124-127) other than *Artist name* and *Text genre,* are thus the result of combing, conflating and selecting from twenty-three original columns. *Artists' intentions*, for instance, are mentioned twice (nos. 2, 6), but since these relate to artistic practice and not to a work's meaning, the two are subsumed under *Artistic practice*. Similarly, *Status claims* about an artist are subsumed under *Biography*; the mention of *Aesthetic experience* is under *What we see*, and the one instance of *Irony,* in label no. 3's narrative on Heidegger, is listed under *Tension between X&Y*.

Text genres. The report genre is dominant, found without exception in all the Babel labels. It is used to describe artistic practices, processes and artworks, to categorize them and give information, to report on what is aesthetically and cognitively experienced. While most of the time the reports use state-of-being or having verbs, when it comes to descriptions, say of artistic processes, the verbs become more active and lead into the explanation genre. As with

the Dahl A4, the dominant text genre provides a 'background colour' into which other texts genres are woven. Of the subordinate text genres, most instances of narrative are used to relate curriculum vitae information. The explanations are largely divided between how we see and elucidations of artistic practice, techniques and methods; the single exposition is used to clarify an -Ism (no. 1). The two discussions (nos. 1, 14) show two sides to an issue.

Level of language and the implied readers. The Babel labels mostly seem accessible to a broad group of readers, but certain labels are geared towards 'artworld insiders'. Perhaps the most difficult label is no. 1. It introduces Neoconceptualism and outlines its aims, but the explanation seems inadequate to interpret Engh's art, for how, precisely, can the tension between torture instruments and aesthetically pleasing craftsmanship be said to represent an institutionally critical art, much less one that is anti-aesthetic? Furthermore, being told that the -Ism seeks to forge connections to the Conceptualism of the 1960s adds little clarity unless readers already know what Conceptualism involves, and the mention of 'readymades' presupposes familiarity with Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) or something similar. But local artworld insiders will probably only struggle with trying to understand how aesthetically pleasing craftsmanship is related to anti-aesthetic art. They will understand the reference to Faldbakken and Einarson as categorizing Engh. The group identity makes him more memorable for the next time they encounter his works. Insiders may also appreciate the discussion about Neoconceptualism's inadequacy.

Label no. 3, for Lafontaine is also geared towards high-proficiency readers. While half of this text is devoted to the interpretive frame of 'artistic practice' – as if to appeal to readers who have never heard of Lafontaine before – it entirely ignores 'what we see', choosing instead to dwell on the work's title and Martin Heidegger. The first paragraph's explanation lists several themes (some quite distressing) and the names of famous philosophers and poets. Each theme is huge, each famous person worthy of extended treatment, but the label format offers no opportunity for it. This label introduces Lafontaine's artistic practice, but does the firing off of themes and names cause word co-location conflict (chewing one concept before biting another)? This re-introduces the more general problem of the inadequacy of the interpretive label format. In the V&A labels the format's inadequacy was revealed through how the art history discourse was chopped into fragments and dispersed across several labels. Here the format is too restricted to make meaningful statements about huge themes.

There are other instances where the language is geared towards readers with high-proficiency or even mastery. I myself wonder about label no. 10's 'cosmic consciousness' – is

there some sort of consciousness pervading the entire cosmos? If so, how does it fit in with label no. 15's sentence 'Our reason, which tells us that everything must be finite, is on a collision course with the incomprehensible infinity of the universe'? To turn aside from aporia, one can read label 14: it starts with 'What perhaps first catches our attention in this work', a clause likely to succeed in catching attention due to the direct appeal to 'our attention'. The label draws on a psychoanalytic theory of a 'mirror stage' in human development and the resulting problem of self-alienation, yet it mentions no theorist (is there an implied reference to Jacques Lacan?). The problems related to mirroring are discussed in everyday language. Most Norwegian readers will have experienced dormitories, summer camp, bunk beds and feeling vulnerable, so it seems plausible that this label was designed expressly for a wide audience. In sum, the more extreme instances of language usage show that the labels are minted for different types of readers.

Interpretive frames and discourses

The interpretive frames fall into two rough categories: some are in an *artworld or art-internal discourse* and others pertain to a *wider social-world discourse.* The frames can also be categorized according to those that offer *indirect* or *more direct* interpretation of artworks. All the labels use interpretive frames commonly found in art-internal discourse, and it could go without saying that art history and the artworld are part of the social world. In the Babel labels this larger world is approached through the 'doorway' of the smaller artworld. Most of the social aspects are expressed through stated themes, and in fact none are art-internal except for those used in the Barclay text (no. 16). The first fourteen labels all point beyond art-internal issues to the wider social world, and the two labels that most emphasize this are the Lafontain text (no. 3) – it reports on human conditions, maladies, philosophers and poets, and on Heidegger's lecture title and Nazi affiliation – and the Faldbakken text (no. 7), which focuses on the biographies of four suicide victims. For both these texts, the work titles are prominent, not what we see or formal analysis. Such absence is typical for the so-called 'New Art History', and it is plausible that the author has assimilated ideas from it (cf. Harris 2001:8-9).[48] But the absence could also be the result of the author simply finding that the appearance and formal qualities of these works are irrelevant for meaning. Standing in sharpest contrast to the Lafontaine and Faldbakken texts are the Barclay, Pihl and Sandberg texts (nos. 16, 17,

[48] Jonathan Harris (2001:9) cites T.J. Clark's gripe about ' "the dreary professional literature" of formal analysis and symbol hunting'.

18), which deal solely with art-internal concerns. The Pihl text goes farthest in treating art as autonomous.

Turning the focus away from the outer extremes, one can detect a dominant pattern in how the interpretive frames are combined – and what it implies. The most dominant pattern is to weave social content into the traditional art historical/theoretical frames of *Biography, Classifying categories, Artistic practice, What we see* and the mention of *Formal aspects* or visual idioms. Strong examples of this pattern are in the texts for Jakobsen (no. 2), Bjarre (no. 8), Pushwagner (no. 9), Murakami (no. 10), Elmgreen & Dragset (no. 14) and Kvie (no. 15). It is insightful to examine just how woven together the two most antithetical frames are – the mention of formal aspects and the social/cultural themes – even in the less strong examples: In no. 1, 'torture' appears alongside 'aesthetically pleasing'; in no. 4, 'emergency' is collocated with 'graphic design'; in no. 9 'conformity' and 'alienation' are spoken of immediately before 'rhythmically placed in compartments'; in no. 11 'loneliness' is mentioned simultaneously as 'the activity of modelling light and shadow; and in no. 14 'large, colourful formats' comes just a few words in front of 'taboos'.

From this one can assume the author has a conventional background in art history and is schooled in doing formal analysis, in taking notice of the way aesthetic experience unfolds, then using these skills as a foundation for extrapolating socially related content. But if this is the case, the author feels no compunction to present that 'art-internal' analysis first or to write in ways that show the social content to be deduced only at a later stage. It seems fruitful to think of the author as sitting on a five-legged stool: One leg is a biographical approach to artists that dates at least as far back as Georgio Vasari's (1987) *Lives*; a second leg is the social history of art that was heavily theorized in the late twentieth century (cf. Harris 2001); a third is a Panofsky-inspired iconographical/iconological method for establishing meaning in art (cf. Panofsky 1955; Holly 1984); a fourth is a modernist-formalist description of art (cf. the reception of Greenberg 1965/1999); and the fifth leg would be phenomenological analysis of one's own perceptual experience of an artwork. This multiple approach manifests itself through the thorough interweaving of interpretive frames. Reflecting back on the Dahl A4 and V&A labels, one can see somewhat similar interweaving, even though those texts include the wider social world to a lesser extent. The pattern in the Babel labels implies that the artworld is decidedly *not* autonomous from the social world.

More or less indirect interpretive frames. Babel's interpretive frames can of course be categorized according to innumerable criteria, but one way which seems fruitful for my

project is to categorize them according to those offering relatively direct interpretation of the works and those that do not. Starting with those that do not: the *Artist's biography* is included in twelve labels, sometimes only with the mention of nationality, but most often with details about schooling. As with the V&A labels, biography always appears for non-Norwegians. For the Norwegian artists Fredriksen (no. 11) and Sandberg (no. 18), since they exert so much influence, the biographical frame seems apt since its verb phrases can well convey that sort of content. Fredriksen represents a contemporary echo of J.C. Dahl: he also studied in Germany and brought back to his homeland artistic forms of expression. By contrast, it seems more arbitrary to be told that Kvie (no. 15) was born in Stavanger and studied in Bergen, or that Faldbakken (no. 7) studied in Bergen and Frankfurt. What bearing could this have on readers' understanding of the works? I suggest that the frame might work to inform more generally about the Norwegian artworld. Only in the case of Pushwagner (no. 9) is biography directly linked to interpretation.

Art genres and *Group affiliation* categorize the artists and make them more memorable – at least to readers who are already familiar with the given categories. If readers do not already have a grasp of the category, however, it may have the same confusing effect as specialized terminology, of which the labels contain very little. Mindful of this, the Jakobsen label's (no. 2) mention of the artist as being 'part of a generation of artists who tried to renew painting' seems exemplarily geared towards non-specialists while the Engh label (no. 1) is geared towards artworld insiders.

Artistic practice was largely excluded from the V&A texts and little used in the Dahl texts. It occurs in fifteen Babel labels, and in the case of Pushwagner (no. 9), truly aids interpretation, since the artist 'links himself, both in terms of ideas and expression, to the commentative and political version of Pop Art'. Usually, however, the frame of artistic practice acts as an introduction to the artist, not the work. This is handy since the majority of visitors will never have heard of most of the artists, even though they are established in the Norwegian art scene and have exhibited in status-bearing venues at home and abroad. In the theory-method chapter I noted that this frame is 'safe'; an author can say something factual, avoid evaluative statements (handy if the author is ambivalent about the work), and leave interpretation to readers themselves. A curious aspect here is that after reading about an artist's practice, one is primed for reading about the work one stands before, so one may feel jilted at the altar of interpretation.

Aesthetic experience and *what we see* are used to spur reader-viewers to active seeing, to notice how they see. To point to what we see, the pronoun 'this' is employed, as it was in

many V&A labels. It points to the artwork. But in looking beyond the immediate meaning of 'this', I see it pointing to the logical order of information for viewer-readers standing before a work. The visual aspects are primary (Serrell 1996:147) whereas secondary aspects pertain to the artist: the biography, CV, thematic starting points, inspirations, influences, legacy, history of reception. (If would be the other way around if the reader was sitting in a library.) By contrast, the Dahl's frequently-used phrase 'as seen in' did not necessarily imply that readers were standing before the work; it seemed to point to seeing with the mind's eye, with analytical distance. This phrase is never found in the Babel labels.

The *order of seeing* referenced in the Babel labels takes into account that viewers do not see everything at once, and often times this frame goes hand-in-hand with what I have called the *Tension between X and Y* (discussed below). The two frames work together: at first one sees and assumes certainty…but on closer inspection one is befuddled. The first impression turns out to be uncertain, and one is left with aporia. The reward of looking longer and more carefully does not lead to certainty but, ideally, to reflection.

The *Formal aspects* frame focuses generally on the perceptual, physical object and *visual idiom* (Beardsley 1958/1981:15-74).[49] These frames can have different outcomes: they can eschew the work's meaning, be used more directly to pursue meaning, or create a situation pregnant with possible meaning. An example of the first outcome is the Sandberg text's (no. 18) mention of 'pure, formal, black and white' and 'almost abstract compositions'. The second outcome is exemplified in the Jakobsen text (no.2 §2). Its study of the formal aspects leads into a Panofsky-inspired pursuit of meaning. The phrase 'multi-headed forms in black and white' (a preiconographical description) undergirds 'group portraits' and 'the faces are expressively rendered with individual features but the contours of the uniforms – hospital gowns and black suits – are erased' (an iconographical description). These descriptions, in turn, undergird what Panofsky called an 'intrinsic' iconological meaning: the two professional fields work with life and death – inextricably related yet fundamental opposites, which tie in with the theme of ephemerality (cf. Panofsky 1955:51-81; Holly 1984:158-160). The third outcome is the most common in the Babel labels, as seen for instance in the Bjarre text (no. 8). Being told about the visual idiom of cartoons and animated films could lead to thoughts about child's play and humour, but the figural forms could just as easily suggest frightening mutation. Perhaps the best example, one that truly leaves readers pregnant to birth their own

[49] Much could be said about this, so I refer the reader to Beardsley's discussion of the difference between statements pointing more to how an author (critic) feels about a work versus statements pointing to perceptual object and the physical object (Beardsley 1958/1981:29-34).

meanings, is the Rickhard label (no. 6). Clues abound: the leitmotif's calmness, as if it were a still life, versus the televised image of a concentration camp, and the work of the picture frame to redouble perspective. But we must create our own story.

More direct interpretive frames. Turning to the frames more directly related to interpretation, one obvious frame is to *State a theme*. This unifies subject matter. It tends to dominate a reader's thoughts and reduce the field of interpretive possibilities, yet that field is much like entering C.S. Lewis's magical wardrobe: the deeper in you go, the larger the field becomes.[50] In the Babel labels some of the specifically stated themes are anxiety, ephemerality, mortality, vulnerability, fear, safety, alienation, conformity, loneliness and taboos – all of which pertain to the social world. 'Space and architecture reflected in liquids' (no. 16) could suggest a social world further removed, being reflected through the formal means of art.

Some Babel labels offer up-front *suggestions for interpretation*. While the wall text mentioned the possibility of 'decoding our choices', in many cases the decoding is already well underway. Lund Bø's (no. 4) 'Do not be afraid' gives us 'the opportunity to look in a new way at the phenomenon of safety signs' is a case in point, but the interpretation still is open-ended. Perhaps we realize we are not all that safe after all, or that we equate the visual idiom itself with safety. 'The displacement of reality' in the Elstrøm text (no. 12) 'allows us to imagine many different concepts of space' and to compare our own interpretation of space with 'how *the art* interprets and renders' it. Here basic interpretation is given. Even so, one needs to focus on one's own experience, understanding and interpretive activity, and make the comparison with how the art interprets and renders. Another example of the residual work readers need to do is in the Murakami label (no. 10): the 'mutable faces are meant to cover the entire spectrum of human feelings and expressions'. This claim about meaning is still open-ended because, practically speaking, how could the whole range of human feelings and emotions be accounted for through a cartoon aesthetic?

Several theorists have written about the prospect of writing labels that give readers something to do: 'to agree with ideas, disagree, use them as building blocks in making conclusions, or make discoveries of their own' (Serrell 1996:83). Whitehead (2012:158-9) draws on Baxandall when the latter speaks of the desirability of 'providing incomplete cues which prompt the visitor to engage actively rather than passively: "to offer a pregnant cultural

[50] In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Lewis 1959), Lucy enters a wardrobe and finds it is much bigger inside than its outside circumference would suggest.

fact and let the viewer work at it is surely both more tactful and more stimulating than explicit interpretation"'.[51] This is what Babel's author has done: give readers heuristic tools.

The last interpretive frame to be discussed is the identification of *tension*. It is specifically mentioned in thirteen labels, other times it is more apparent in the works themselves (not the focus of my research). Tension can pertain to the artwork's formal aspects, to the reader-viewer's aesthetic experience or the given themes or suggested meanings. The identification of tension is like a mark of high quality in the art; if a work lacks tension – say some sense of misplacement, incongruity, conflict or foreboding – then the assumption is that it has failed. It cannot be important art if it does not thematically address a problem. Judgements of beauty (taste) are not relevant nowadays.[52] The pointing out of tension is the feature that makes the Babel labels most different from the V&A labels and the Dahl A4. At the same time, given how it implies favourable evaluation, it runs parallel to the positive criticism in the V&A labels and it is a value judgement.

For art exhibitions with works by several artists, the cardinal interpretive device is a concept that draws all the works into the same conceptual territory and rationalizes the selection (cf. Whitehead 2012:93). For the Dahl A4, this concept was 'father of Norwegian painting'; for the V&A exhibition 'the exhibitionary landscape'; for Babel it could be the judgment of 'tension' as much as the theme of 'pluralism'.

***A missing discourses*?** Before ending this chapter, it is worth reflecting on a discourse / frame that is conspicuously not included in label no. 14 for Elmgreen & Dragset. This label takes stock in what is seen. It points to an absurdity and wends through mortality, outdoor-school dorms, summer camp, vulnerability and mirroring other's behaviour to gain acceptance. The label would surely enable most visitors to generate further meaning based on their own horizon of understanding. But Elmgreen & Dragset's artistic project has always been to create images dealing with gay identity:

> […] Their themes are linked to their identity as a homosexual artist duo. Over the years, their basic formula for producing works is, in its most concentrated form, to produce slapstick versions of 'impossible objects' (Powerless Structures), which

[51] Whitehead quotes from Michael Baxandall (1991) Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally purposeful Objects, in I. Karp & S.C. Lavine (eds.) *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, pp. 33-41.
[52] See, e.g., Thierry de Duve (1998) *Kant after Duchamp*, Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, pp. 283-325, for a discussion on why the judgement of beauty (taste) is seen as irrelevant.

> thematically treat this mirroring relation and which can be understood as a gay characterization *(bøssetegn)* and an artistic stand point.[53]

Knowing that Elmgreen & Dragset have always linked their gay identity to their artistic standpoint, it seems that to show respect for their project, the label should have followed the pattern of Pushwagner (no. 9), where personal identity /biography are linked to interpretation, or to state the artists' intention, as in label no. 6: 'Rickhard wants to maintain…'. As Bauman (2004:153) asserts, the circumspect mediator conveys the authoritative artist's 'logical focus' – the artist's intentions – for the work. But Barthe's 'death of the author' must be contended with as well; after the work leaves the artist's hand, it enters the domain of the receiver to do with as he or she wills. How to account for the absence? Perhaps the author thought gender irrelevant for interpretation. This, at least, is largely the case for today's women artists. Or is homosexuality too problematic to mention? A more likely reason is that the homosexual theme is so strong; it would dominate other interpretive possibilities (cf. Burnham & Kai-Kee 2011:62). In any case, the absence points to competition between discourses and frames and the ethical question of which to include in such a limited format.

Authority* and *status. Re-reading the Babel labels for the umpteenth time, only two seem to award authority to the artist. These are the labels for Fredriksen (no. 11) and Sandberg (no. 18), and in both cases, it is through the *influence* tool. The 'pioneer' Fredriksen is described as a renewer of Norwegian art; Sandberg, as gallery founder, helped initiate 'a sea change' leading to photography rising in the genre hierarchy (as did landscape painting in the Dahl A4 and in the V&A wall text). The authority of these two artists transfers into enhanced status. Another artist awarded status is Melgaard (no. 13), through the phrase 'one of Norway's most controversial'. The status of most of the Babel artists is passed over in silence, so it seems that only collectively can they fulfil the wall text's claim of being 'important'.

It would be entirely fitting to summarize the comparative analysis of this chapter, but I leave it to the next chapter, which summarizes the main findings from all three cases.

[53].'..Men derudover handler projektet Elmgreen & Dragset også i seg selv om fordoblinger, spejlinger og det ikke-dialektiske. Temaerne er produksjonsjæssigt knyttet til selve det at være en homoseksjell kunstner duo, hvor den grundlæggende værkformel, i sin mest koncentrerede form, gennem årene er blevet vist i slapstickagtig form med "umulige objekter" (Powerless Structures), der handler om dette spejlforhold og som både kan forstås som et bøssetegn og et kunstnerisk ståsted.' http://www.kunstkritikk.no/kritikk/turistattraktion/ [23 February 2013]. I would like to thank Christer Dynna for his discussion on Elmgreen & Dragset.

5. Findings, Discussion and Reflection

In the introductory chapter I posed three research questions. The first concerned how the mediational texts in the gallery spaces of art museums point beyond their immediate meanings, the second asked what the texts meant above and beyond providing cursory information or interpretation, and the third asked about the relation between a text's format and the meaning it enabled. My first hypothesis was formulated in direct relation to these questions: I hypothesized that by analysing the devices used to write the texts, I could discover how those indirect or 'yonder' meanings were generated and what they were, and that I could understand more about the relation between a text and its format. This concluding chapter will show that hypothesis one has weathered well but that hypotheses two through five fared far poorer. I begin by reviewing hypotheses two through five (these pertain to the first two research questions – I hypothesized nothing about the third research question), showing how the hypotheses were corroborated or falsified, and the findings to which I believe the outcomes lead. I then present findings for the third research question concerning the relation between a text's format and the meaning it enables.

Hypothesis two

Hypothesis two was that of the three cases, the texts for the National Romantic exhibitions would be most similar in terms of the devices, discourses and interpretive frames used. The Babel texts would be most different from the Dahl texts. Hypothesis two turned out to be partly true, partly false. As for its general truth; indeed, both the Dahl and the V&A texts included the National Romantic Discourse, but not as I had anticipated. Holding in mind that expressions of National- and Nature Romanticism usually involve feeling-oriented language about a nation, its landscape and people, in the A4, the most evocative words suggested feelings of awe and fear, but seen in light of the whole text, the discussion of the landscape paintings was through a distanced, analytical voice, and far removed from how the British landscape was 'gushed over' in the V&A labels. There I found strong emotions expressed through a postmodern quoting device. Thus, what I will call the first finding is that *the text authors for both exhibitions talked about National- and Nature Romanticism, not by participating in it, but with devices calibrated to their own contemporary era.*[54]

[54] I found a trace of Romanticism about the artist in the idea of Dahl being an artist genius, but this was not overt, nor did it specifically relate to National- or Nature Romanticism.

There is also another instantiation of hypothesis two's general truth. Looking at Table 6, one sees that several of Babel's interpretive frames were absent from the Dahl and V&A cases. Babel's language level varied more than that of the other cases, and the wall-text authors handed authority to reader-viewers. This was not done in the Dahl and V&A texts, so when comparing the three cases, the Dahl and V&A cases do appear more similar.

Table 6: Chart for calibrated tool chest

	Text genres	**Level of language and assumed reader**	**authority**	**main interpretive frames**	**Order of main discourses**
Main study objects					
Dahl 1st-level: wall text	Report	Early + upper intermediate Wide readership	of the museum, Dahl, the author	Artist's bio/CV BKM's possessions	Status-identity of museum and Dahl Art history
Dahl 2nd- level: A4	Narrative, report, exposition	Upper intermediate + high proficiency Narrower readership	Dahl author	Artist's bio, CV, identity, Genre hierarchy, Analytical view of Nature Romanticism	Art history: Status-identity of Dahl, BKM, Bergen Analytically distanced view of Nature Rom. & National Rom.
Secondary study objects, used for comparative analysis					
Dahl webpage & program	Exposition, report	Elementary + early intermediate Wide readership	Museum	Journey metaphor Explorer metaphor	Status-identity of BKM Marketing/branding
V&A 1st-level: wall text	Report	Elementary + early intermediate Wide readership	Museum	V&A history of possessions & collecting	Status-identity of V&A Design of gallery
V&A 2nd-level: wall text for Room 87	Narrative, explanation, report	Elementary + early intermediate Wide readership	Landscape painting Author (through matter-of-fact tone)	Landscape painting's status, genre hierarchy through parent-child metaphor	Art history: landscape painting's status, artists compete for status
V&A 3rd-level: work labels	Narrative, report, exposition, directive, explanation	Elementary + early intermediate Wide readership	The label author's authority outranks the dead critic's. Constable and De Wint are treated as especially authoritative.	What we see, artist's bio, what work is based on, frame of critic's praise/blame, romanticized landscape	Art history British landscape Social history Postmodern approach to National Romantic disc.
Babel 1st-level: wall text	Report, explanation, directive	Early + upper intermediate Narrow readership? (due to length)	Museum Curators (authors of wall text) have the authority of artists Reader-viewers are singled out as authorities	BKM recent history of possessions Pluralism	Status-identity of BKM and Bergen Museum-internal matters (acquisition policy and exhib. hanging practices)
Babel 2nd- level: work labels	Report, explanation, exposition, discussion, narrative	Early + upper intermediate, + high proficiency (in some labels) Both wide and narrow readership, depending on label	Author Readers	What we see, artist-related frames of bio, cv, practice Stated themes, especially distressing ones (fear, angst, war, loneliness), Tension	Contemporary art history Modern social world

On the other hand, certain devices were used in all the texts, to the point where the Babel case could not be said to be 'more different' from the Dahl case. All the texts contained high-affinity statements and authorless authority. The report genre also stood out for being in all the texts. To account for why, I assume, with Ravelli (2006:20), that the museums were seeking to fulfil an institutional aim: 'the classic museum function of cataloguing and reporting on knowledge'. The report is handy for introducing things, and if art museums are *ingressinstitusjoner* (note 11, p. 8), then introductions are necessary before presenting other knowledge and will take priority.

By looking at the *implied readers, the order in which information was presented,* and *authority*, it is possible to see even more clearly the equivocality of hypothesis two. All the V&A texts implicated the same reader group, whereas the Dahl texts implied two reader groups, the wall text and annual program being directed towards a wider group than the A4. The Babel texts also showed inconsistency in implied readers, with the wall text, due to its length, implicating a smaller group than did its language level. Some Babel labels implied lower intermediate readers; others implied higher intermediate readers or an 'in-group' already familiar with the contemporary Norwegian art scene.

As for the order of information – and here I largely restrict the discussion to the Dahl A4 and the V&A and Babel labels – the V&A and Babel labels shared more similarities than did the A4 and the V&A labels. The A4 used a chronological schema for presenting Dahl's biography, and it frequently referred to the analytical mind's-eye with the phrases 'such as' and 'as seen in' (see p. 81). While some of the V&A labels also started out with a chronological biography, approximately half of them used the 'this' pronoun to immediately acknowledge the reader standing before the work. Babel's labels sometimes acknowledged the reader's presence, sometimes pointed to 'this work' or 'here', sometimes they started off with biography and CV, but other times they never actually addressed the work at all, opting instead to dwell on the work's title or a social-political issue.

Regarding authority; the Dahl A4 and V&A and Babel labels all used high-affinity statements and authorless authority. But the A4 had a more distanced, analytical tone than did the V&A labels. In the latter it seemed as though authority was being given to the quoted critics, but after analysis, it became clear that the author was still the major authority, who used the nineteenth-century critic to voice feelings and opinions the author wanted to present but for some reason was reluctant to formulate directly. Where the difference in authority most showed up was in the treatment of artists. Dahl's authority was stressed more than that of the art historian, through the sustained mediation of his biography, achievements and

legacy. Dahl would not have called himself the 'father of Norwegian painting'; this was left to the mediator to say, and through that device, the A4 author paralleled Bauman's (2004:128-158) example of the Fijian chieftain's spokesman, who had less authority than the chief. In the V&A texts, the artists were seen as competing, so no authoritative figure predominated. In the Babel texts, only Fredriksen and Sandberg came across as authoritative, and in both cases it was through the mention of their legacy. As for reader-visitor authority; this was low in the Dahl and V&A texts as a whole, and higher in the Babel wall text, given how readers were told that 'it is your encounter with the art that is important'. I will now press on to discussing the other hypotheses, and in the process, the perception of hypothesis two's indeterminacy will be strengthened further.

Hypothesis three

I had assumed that for all my study objects, the most dominant discourse and interpretive frames would concern art history; its themes would be treated generally and introductorily in the primary-level texts, then more in-depth in the second- and third-level texts (e.g., through master signifiers and frames related to the artist's life and practice, formal analysis, and so forth). This was falsified when, in each of the three cases, the primary-level texts dealt so heavily with the museum's status and identity.

From falsifying the hypothesis, a finding is that *in all three cases, the primary-level wall texts' dominant discourse was 'the museum's identity and status based on its possessions', whereas in the second- and third-level texts, art history discourse was dominant.* This finding obviously concerns the main discourses and discourse ordering. In the following paragraphs I first discuss the status discourse, then the art history discourse, then discuss the possibility of their being a general discourse order for all three cases.

Status and identity discourse

In the three cases, status and identity were chiefly expressed in relation to the following subjects: the *museum*, the *artist(s)*, the *genres of art or painting* and the *artworks (collectively)*. The identity and status of each subject was built through linking it with other subjects. The one subject could conceivably have some identity through mere existence in the world, but the linkage with other subjects was crucial. This observation recalls Jørgensen and Phillips (1999:19) point (drawing on Saussure) that signs do not acquire their meaning from reality (existence) but from other signs, in a mutable network.

The museum's status. BKM expressed its identity and status by pointing first of all to its possessions, which include works by high-status names such as Picasso, then to its connection to Dahl, Dahl's connection to C.D. Friedrich and the city of Bergen, and Dahl's relation to Norway and northern Europe, and BKM's relation to the Dresden period of Norwegian art history. This implicated BKM/Bergen as an important hub on northern Europe's artworld map. But the geographical constellation generating status and identity was even more obvious in the Babel wall text. There, the institutional aim of building identity and status seemed more important than the stated aim of presenting the theme of pluralism. The master signifier 'pluralism' was indeed used to describe today's artworld, but its thrust was to argue for why BKM in Bergen can be as high-ranking as major centres in today's globalized artworld.

The V&A's status and identity were also stressed in the primary-level wall text, being expressed through phrases emphasizing the august history of its collecting practice ('since its foundation'). In the phrase 'home to the first national collection of British art', the words 'home', 'national' and 'British' modified the museum, causing its identity-status to coincide with that awarded to it in the House of Lords. (The marked emphasis on status and identity in the two museums' primary-level wall texts incites me to want to do further study of a larger sample of museums to see if this focus is common in primary-level texts.)

Presenting a discourse on a museum's identity-status in a primary-level text has to do with branding – it qualifies the museum's character. It is a matter of gaining the public's trust and respect. In each case, the bid for public trust was supported by the argument – in not so many words – that 'if you see this exhibition, you can experience or learn something', for instance about the Dresden period of Norwegian art history, the first national collection of British art, or something about BKM's contemporary art collection'. As such, the primary texts made claims about what the visitor could get from the exhibitions.

Status of the artist(s). Status goes hand-in-hand with authority in some respects, but an artist can have status without having authority (Melgaard, e.g., is a case of having status but not authority). It will come as no surprise that Dahl was awarded more status than any other artist in the study. By comparison, the V&A artists were seen as engaged in fierce competition for status. Even Britain's beloved Constable sometimes lost out. Only from Room 87's title could one really gather that Turner and Constable enjoyed higher status than the others. In the Babel texts, three artists were mentioned as having special status: Fredriksen (for bringing new artistic expressions to Norway), Sandberg (for helping raise the status of photo art) and Melgaard (for being controversial). One would have to take into account other categories not

included in this study, such as location in the gallery, to grasp that Leonard Rickard had special status. But the general lack of emphasis on the special status of individual artists may be linked to the works on show lacking 'milk cow' status (discussed below).

Through comparing the way in which the status and identity of the museums and artists were presented in the three cases, I found that *the introductory wall texts functioned similarly to an artist's CV*: in a CV, an artist, without seeming boastful, connects himself or herself to other subjects (e.g., institutions and geographical places). An artist cannot seem to enhance his or her identity-status by writing 'I have made X', but a museum certainly can claim identity-status writing 'We possess X'.

Status and identity of the artworks and their genre classifications. In the National Romantic exhibitions, the landscape painting genre as a whole was seen as engaged in competition for status. Also in Babel, the Sandberg label presented photography as competing for status. But when it came to Elmgreen & Dragset's bunk beds or Lund Bø's safety signs, the aspect of artistic genre seemed entirely irrelevant. Viewing the three cases together, it is obvious that the status of artistic genres is minimally contentious today.

In the Dahl case, no particular work was singled out as having greater significance or status than any other – not even *Birch Tree in a Storm* – there it was the birch tree *per se* that was iconic, not the painting. The Dahl works were awarded collective status, in combination with the works by Dahl's students, as 'giving an overview of the Dresden period in Norwegian art history'.

The V&A works were also presented as having collective rather than individual status. Their identity was as 'British art', as 'full-scale landscapes' and as 'exhibition landscapes'. Only two works were singled out in the labels: De Wint's *A Cornfield* ('his masterpiece') and Turner's *East Cowes Castle: The Regatta Starting for their Moorings* ('one of the highest pieces of intellectual art existing'), but in both labels, the status was a bit fishy since it was not awarded by the authoritative author. There was only quoted praise from the past. The fact of being exhibited in a prestigious venue was treated as tombstone information, but Constable's painting no. 16, which he had removed from the Royal Academy exhibition due to severe criticism, was treated as no less worthy. So the status and identity of the works in Room 87 seemed largely collective, as part of the first national collection of British art.

None of the Babel works were singled out with any overtly status- or identity-enhancing clauses. It was a bit surprising, then, when comparing the labels with the wall text, to read that the works were 'important' and that Bergen was implicated as an important centre for artistic

production, but in the labels, not to learn which works were produced in Bergen. BKM's visitors are enjoined to experience important art, but the absence of clauses singling out individual importance could suggest that the two exhibitions contain no so-called 'milk cows' – the sort of artworks tourists visit a city or museum expressly to see, works which pull in the public year after year and *seem* to have an inherent identity needing no further mediation to show the relevance of (e.g., *Mona Lisa,* or, perhaps for the Norwegian context, Munch's *Scream*). Alternatively, if BKM does have 'milk cows', their identity is supressed in the gallery texts. This observation extends to the V&A case.

I hold to the idea that any artwork could become a milk cow if it were marketed to that end. A work's actual relevance for visitors (in relation to their own lifeworld) may be less decisive for how it is experienced than how it is marketed and mediated. But this idea leads into the problem of gaining public trust; if the authors had followed Ruskin in claiming so-and-so's artwork to be 'one of the highest pieces of intellectual art existing', such an inflated claim about status and identity could threaten the museum's branding as a trusted institution.

Art history discourse

As stated, in the second- and third-level texts (Dahl A4, the V&A room 87 wall-text and labels and the Babel labels), an art historical discourse topped the discourse order, but the social history of art and the wider social world (e.g., the cultural landscape) were also represented, especially in the V&A and Babel texts. *Artist-related* interpretive frames were the most prevalent: biography and CV (especially where an artist was born and studied), group affiliation, influences, artistic practice (e.g., an artist's media and methods), artist's intentions, patrons and legacy. *Artwork-related* frames included the production process and the circumstances of production (e.g., sketched in situ but painted in Dresden) a work's 'starting point' (often a theme), artistic materials (physical), categorizing the work according to genre and –Isms, and formal analysis. *Viewer-related* frames centred on what we see ('this'), the order of seeing (pointing to things we see), and how we feel when looking at the work. The last category I would organize under art history is the *social history of art*; it came to expression through the mention of what other people said about an artist or a work. Beyond the social history of art was the *wider social world*, which mostly manifested itself through the mention of themes (e.g., the Norwegian landscape, boat building, loneliness). So even the non-art historical themes were approached through the framing devices of art history.

The above frames appeared on a sliding scale, with the Dahl A4 using the most artist-related frames and the Babel labels using the most themes drawn from the wider social world

(suicide, etc.). Looking just at the Dahl A4 and the V&A and Babel labels, the dominant interpretive frame in the A4 was Dahl's biography; it offered a series of temporally-ordered hooks on which to hang pictures. In the V&A labels, the actual pointing to the artwork ('what we see') shared equal billing with the quoting of critics and the mention of landscape features. The V&A's label pattern was to select a few frames and to repeat them often, the repetition binding the artists and motifs together and making the exhibition appear as a unified whole. The Babel labels deployed a far wider array of interpretive frames. And even through some frames were repeated often – for instance, to offer direct suggestions for how to interpret the works, or to point to angst-generating themes and tension – this did not 'pull' the disparate works towards the same meaning. In the V&A labels, by contrast, for all the works produced by British artists, the suggested meaning was to love the British landscape. In the Babel labels there was constant discordance due to the interweaving of antithetical frames: the mention of formal/aesthetic aspects alongside social maladies.

Discourse order

Looking at all the texts analysed here, is it possible to identify a *general* discourse order? I think so: 1. art history (which includes the artist's status-identity and the social history of art); 2. status-identity of museum; 3. wider social world. This order cannot necessarily be detected when looking at texts individually, but by looking at the three cases in relation to the tools of implied reader and authority. The Dahl texts can serve to clarify the point.

The A4's implied readers are a narrower group than those targeted by the superlatives in the Internet/annual program and wall text. Yet for those status-bearing claims to be justified, they depend on the A4's art-historical authority, its ability to *warrant* status. Otherwise readers would suspect the superlatives to be exaggeration (cf. Montebello 2004:166-7). The art historical discourse does not need to be justified by the museum's status discourse. Pragmatically speaking, however, if the A4's art history is to be read by a wide readership, it does need the status discourse, as the fishing metaphor (Ch. 3, p. 57) elucidated. Accordingly, the two discourses exist in a symbiotic relation. There may be tension and conflict between the two discourses but pragmatically speaking, they need each other. Nevertheless, art history is primary because it does not need warranting by the museum institution's status-identity – it is warranted by external *instanser*, for instance universities and art-history publishers.

The artist(s)' identity-status and the social history of art clearly appeared subordinate to art history and gained meaning from that context-giving relation. To explain: Dahl's identity-status could have been, but was not, presented in the context of natural science, for he was a

careful observer of nature (Moe 1988:97-106). Precise types of vegetation, birds and animals are identifiable in his paintings, and his clouds studies were used as the basis for meteorologists' characterization of cloud types.[55] Likewise, Turner's identity-status could have, but was not, linked to marine history, through his depictions of boats and life at sea. Elmgreen & Dragset could have been linked to gay identity, and Leonard Rickhard to the Royal Norwegian Order of St. Olav, and so forth.

Accordingly, while it is impossible to confirm hypothesis three – that the most dominant discourse and interpretive frames concern art history – it is still possible to say that art history supplies the context for viewing the other discourses, and it is the guarantor or warrantor for status in its various manifestations, thus it would be the dominant discourse.

Hypothesis four

The impossibility of verifying hypotheses two and three lead to the falsification – at least for the Dahl and V&A exhibitions – of hypothesis four: the assumption that the ethos of the time when the art was produced, the art- and social world of that era, would have greater impact on the discourses and frames used than would the museum's institutional aims.

To elucidate the falsification; if a nineteenth-century ethos had had the greatest impact on the text, geographical linkage would presumably have served National Romanticism and Nature Romanticism. The Dahl texts emphasized geographical linkage, especially by linking BKM in Bergen with Dahl in Bergen, then Dahl with Norway and Northern Europe. But by writing from the context of the current ethos – most remarkably BKM's emphasis on identity and status-building based on its possessions – the geographical linkage enhanced BKM's identity and status, thus indirectly pointing to current institutional aims more than art historical aims and the aims of National and Nature Romanticism.

However – and here is where hypothesis four still holds – during Dahl's lifetime (1788-1857) and during the years his works were acquired by Bergen's art society (starting in 1851),[56] the city's self-image was a very important concern, and that identity was strongly linked to Dahl being born and bred in Bergen. Thus the ethos of the time when Dahl's works were produced does, in this respect, still permeate the way the Dahl texts were written. One can gather this from several sources. One instance is in Willy Dahl's (1988) essay

[55] 'Dahls mange skystudier dannet først og fremst et solid grunnlag for hans senere arbeid, men de var faktisk også i lang tid grunnlaget for karakterisering av skytyper også for meteorologer' (Moe 1988:104').
[56] *Bergen Kunstforening* (art society) was founded in 1838 as a direct result of Dahl's initiative. In 1851, this society, also on Dahl's initiative, started acquiring artworks with a view towards eventually opening an art gallery (in 1878). The first works acquired were by Dahl himself (Ormhaug 1988:95-96).

'Kulturbyen Bergen Omkring 1800 – og Lyder Sagen', in the discussion of Claus Fasting's *Bergenske Provinziabladede*, where the 'provincial' in the title relates Bergen solely to continental Europe and Copenhagen, and certainly not to Christiania (Oslo) (Dahl 1988:65-66).[57] As for the strong link between Bergen's identity and Dahl during his own lifetime, there is an account of a party held in Dahl's honour when he revisited Bergen in August 1826. Lyder Sagen wrote a song describing Dahl as 'you, the pride of Bergen, the glory of Norway' (Ormhaug 1988:96). With this background, it seems clear that in both the introductory wall text and the A4, the linkage of BKM, Bergen and Dahl simply reiterates and reinforces an already well-established discourse on identity and status.

The Babel text analysis apparently supports hypothesis four, for there the ethos of the time when the art was produced was the same as the ethos of the time in which the authors and curators live. But in this case, it seems more likely that *if 'the ethos of the time' has any bearing at all, it is the time when the gallery texts were written that is the most important time factor, not the time the art was made.* For all the study objects, present-day concerns could be said to undergird the devices, discourse order and interpretive frames that were used. For all the primary-level texts, the aim was to present the museum's identity and status based on its possessions and collecting practice. In the second- and third-level texts, the concern was to present art history and its attendant frames, Nature- and National Romanticism, social history and issues in ways considered appropriate, justifiable and authoritative today.

Overall, however, the study showed that the ethos of the time is probably less decisive for the way the gallery texts were written than was the museum's institutionally-oriented aim of presenting itself as a professional possessor, collector and mediator of art, art history and culture. None of the texts showed the museums as loci for research. A finding, then, would still be that *current institutional aims and the ethos of the time when the texts are written have the greatest impact on the discourses and interpretive frames that are used.*

Hypothesis five

Hypothesis five concerned the level of language. I posited that the V&A texts would differ from the BKM texts by being geared towards a wider public through using easier language and by including more social history and devices for activating readers. I assumed it would

[57] Bergen's identification as a city of culture (*kulturbyen*) endures, as does its rivalry with Oslo. In preparation for Edvard Munch's 150th birthday commemoration in 2013, BKM, on its 2012 Christmas card, quoted a letter Munch wrote to Gustav Scheifler: 'This summer you must travel from Oslo to Bergen. It is the most beautiful city in Norway. The room where my pictures hang, in Rasmus Meyer's Collection, is actually better than the room in the museum in Oslo.' (BKM's Christmas Card, 2012).

accord with the V&A's restructuring reforms if the gallery texts activated readers by, for instance, using the second-person pronoun 'you', asking pointed questions, using imperative verb forms in instructions (e.g., 'Imagine you are walking along that path in the foreground'). I did not find any such overt reader-activating devices; nevertheless, the rest of the hypothesis was corroborated.

The simpler level of language came most clearly to the fore when comparing the Dahl A4's 'genre hierarchy' with the V&A's 'parent-child' relation and 'family tree' metaphor. Using these devices, all readers could presumably get the gist of a 'genre hierarchy' without it even being mentioned, simply based on their own life experience. But mindful of my prejudices for simpler language, if the V&A author had written 'genre hierarchy', this would possibly have enabled some readers to learn a new concept that would help them organize their ideas according to more precise schema than the parent-child and the family tree would allow. It could have helped them think in new ways. This, in turn, would affect seeing because seeing is a brain function. The abstract concept creates conditions for thinking, which in turn 'improve the mind' and can deepen an aesthetic experience. But this is not to suggest that the simpler language cannot also have the same effect – it is just more circuitous. This prompts the question of why the A4 used more intermediate and advanced-reader language. Part of the reason might be a fear that colleagues and academics might not appreciate the text if it appealed to a wider audience. This, at least, is a sentiment expressed by Shelley M. Park:

> All too often, as Hook notes, 'educators […] fear their work will not be valued by other academics if it is presented in a way that makes it accessible to a wider audience'. […] [Institutional norms] devalue – indeed may negatively value – research topics and styles that are interesting and accessible to a general audience, encouraging instead a form of scholarship that is both elitist and exclusionary. (quoted in Adams 2010, no page number)

Whether or not this reasoning underlies some of BKM's texts (e.g., Babel label no. 3 for Lafontaine, see Appendix 6, p. 117) or whether it is more a matter of the author simply conforming to a traditional model of art-historical scholarly writing, is unclear. The A4 sought to impart received knowledge – knowledge established well before the Dahl exhibition was mounted in 2003. It was imparted to the author through authoritative, science-based research. So the academic climate (ethos) in which the author read that research could presumably also affects the language choices.

Relations between the text formats and meaning

In Chapter 1, I posed the research question *What is the relation between a text's format and the meaning it enables?* I approach this question now from the angles of what the formats may signify about visitors and the museum's identity; their relation to text genres; the meaning a format and text genre in combination enable; a review of the problems with the A4 and label formats and, finally, a discussion of the devices that draw readers into artworks, the order of devices and the logical relation of that order to the format.

What might the formats signify about visitors?

Different text formats signify different beliefs about visitors and the museum's function. Put baldly, the shorter the text, the more the museum sees itself as an *ingressinstitusjon* directing its message to people who prefer learning through looking more than reading; the longer the text, the more the museum sees itself as directing its message to readers who prefer learning through abstract means. The A4 hand-out format implies that readers like to 'possess' information, take it home, read it later, that they have poorer eyesight, or simply want more bodily freedom – after all, when a text is affixed to a wall, the visitor has no choice but to stand there.[58] The introductory wall text and interpretive label formats presuppose that readers can stand still for extended periods without physical discomfort. This narrows the implied visitor group considerably. The V&A labels, however, were also printed on A4 sheets and available in a ring binder, so in this respect, the V&A label format was also adapted to the same visitor group as the Dahl A4 format, except for that visitors could not take the ring binder home.

Relation between format and text genres

The formats enable discourses through enabling text genres. In the course of the study it became clear that the formats were significant for the text genres used, and that by analysing the genres, I could learn something about both the formats' significance and the text genres. I will restrict this discussion to the formats and how they related to the most antithetical text genres: the narrative and the report. What I mean by 'antithetical' is that the narrative seems to require the most space whereas the report seems to require the least.

[58] Although the V&A did not offer leaflets, it is worth noting that in a survey of paintings gallery visitors, the most desirable 'form of mediation' was guidebooks and the second most was leaflets. See pp. pp. 25-27, 29 of http://media.vam.ac.uk/media/website/uploads/documents/legacy_documents/file_upload/17769_file.pdf [11 April 2013]

The A4 format was long enough to tell a satisfactory story, whereas the stories in the shorter formats seemed truncated, the protagonist's problem being introduced and resolved with minimal mention of the leaver for change. Often a starting biographical narrative was quickly superseded by a report. Several stories contained archetypes: Dahl's life paralleled Abraham and his legacy the Great Covenant, and landscape painting's upward mobility referenced the Ugly Duckling. Recalling the adage 'every text genre has its temptations', in the case of narrative biography, the temptation seemed to be to make the protagonist a heroic genius. Yet I cannot say the archetypes were irresponsibly used since they were backed by evidence.

The short label format easily allowed for reports of the existence of something. These reports were presented with a scholarly tone generated by passive state-of-being verbs and authorless authority (Example from V&A 1st level wall text: 'Many British and European paintings are displayed in other galleries of the V&A, and many more may be seen by arrangement in the Print Room'). It seems like authorless authority is the 'temptation' of the report genre. Most often, the reports were marked by morsels of information packed into one or two words: methods and materials, themes, group affiliation and -Isms. Yet a report could be mixed with an explanation that caused the report's inert verbs to be displaced with more lively action verbs. An instructive example was V&A 2nd level wall text, §2: 'painters specialised', 'Constable concentrated', 'Turner travelled' and 'others sought inspiration'. And as the label for Elmgreen & Dragset (no. 14, Appendix 6, p. 122) showed, when using a report, it was still possible to present the artwork from the visitor-engaging angle of how one might experience it: 'What perhaps first catches our attention in this work is the absurd, dysfunctional and somewhat amusing combination of the two beds that seem to mirror each other.' This sentence does not use the report simply to state the existence of bunk beds, since the 'how we see' frame presupposes existence. It points to an already-iconographical level 'the two beds' in the same breath as it starts offering deeper interpretation (mirroring). So the reports could be dull or lively, authoritative or populist, all depending on whether they were pure reports or delivered in a mixed text-genre mode.

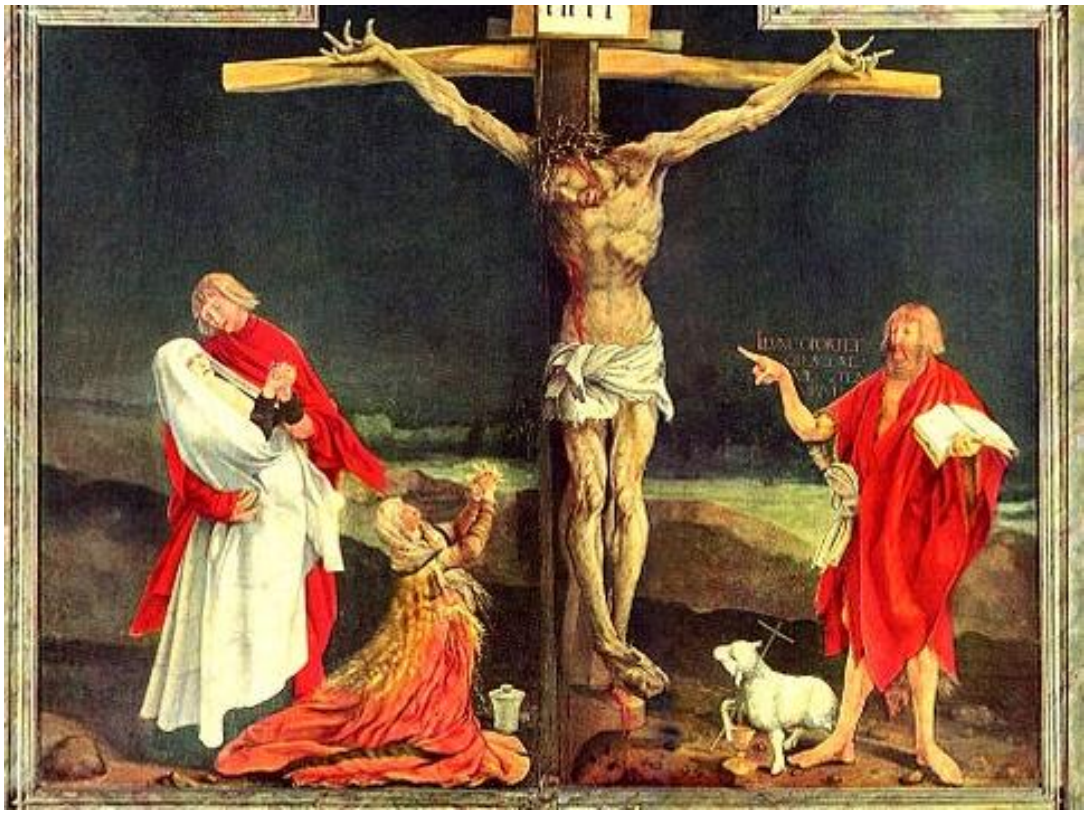
Problems with the A4 format and label format

The problems with the A4 format (Ch. 3, p. 57) were not greater than the problems with the label format (Ch. 4, p. 77), they were merely different problems. The A4's big problem was that it resulted in frustration over not immediately finding information specifically related to the work in front of one's nose. The label format's big problem was that it only allowed

snippets of information and no sustained treatment. It was also uncertain whether information in one label should be applied down-line, or whether readers would have the presence of mind to make such applications. These problems were however somewhat ameliorated in the V&A labels because the interpretive frames were relatively restricted and repeated from label to label. But the problems were exacerbated in the Babel labels. With so many discourses and interpretive frames and the short space in which to present them, all the author could do was introduce something and the space was used up. At times – and perhaps it had to do with the (dis)organizing theme of pluralism – it seemed hard to grasp the goal of the information presented. It seemed random to be told, for instance, that Kvie was from Stavanger (no. 15, Appendix 6, p. 122). If CV information for all the Babel artists had been mentioned, it would have been possible to make comparisons and learn more about the formation of contemporary Norwegian artists. It would in turn have seemed 'natural' that the CV discourse / interpretive frame was used – and its contingent and socially constructed aspect would have been far less noticeable. So recalling my own assumption (Ch. 2, p. 21), that all the information in the label is contingent, the Babel labels could be said to emphasize this very aspect, whereas the tool of repetition used in the V&A labels occluded it.

The relation between the format, its placement, and the devices: how this relation affects a text's ability to draw reader-viewers into the works

The text format and its placement stand in a logical and direct relation to the selection of devices and the order in which they appear. Through the analysis, I came across devices whose power was to draw reader-viewers into the works and provide conditions for attention to deepen into absorption. (This was one of the proposed goals of mediational texts, Chapter 1 p. 4). The frame of 'what we see' was one such device. It acknowledged the reader's immediate context in the gallery room, standing before the artwork. The pronoun 'this' was also paramount: 'The demonstrative "this" can never be without a bearer' (Wittgenstein 1958/1981:§45), and to that bearer the 'what we see' tool and 'this' concretely point, bringing the artwork into the viewer's immediate lifeworld. Although this may seem a bit far-fetched, one could think of them as playing a role similar to John the Baptist, pointing.



Mathias Grünewald, *Crucifixion*, centre panel of the closed *Isenheim Altarpiece* (about 1510, Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar).

Alongside that 'cousin' were clauses suggesting possible responses to an artwork, and clauses inviting visitors to use their mind's ear, nose and hands. The mind's eye, with its distanced analytical function, became relatively moot when standing face-to-face with a work, since readers could easily be sitting in a chair at home. The formalist discourse also fell into this category when it pointed to light and shadow, colours, composition and the like.

By contrast, frames pointing to the artist's biography, CV, inspirations, influences, artistic practice and methods, legacy and history of reception were secondary to the reader's immediate context. I do not mean to say that when these frames were included they made the text bad. I simply recognize the consequential distinction between an *order coinciding with the reader's immediate context* and a more *historically-logical order of information* (Serrell 1996:147). When analysing the devices and their order in relation to the three formats – wall text, A4, interpretive wall label – the historically logical order of information was most logical when it was used in the introductory wall texts, precisely because such texts did not point to any particular work. It was partly logical in the A4 (and this would go for any hand-out) simply because visitors could move around with it and take it home. The historical-logical order of information was least logical for the interpretive labels, precisely because that format was affixed to the wall near the work. In this case, it was entirely logical to put CV

content in the last sentence – as in the Kvie label mentioned above, even though that CV info seemed random. This shows the practical consequence of the pointing function; how the choice of devices and the order in which they appear stand in a logical relation to the text format and its location.

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The initial purpose of a text in an art museum gallery is open-ended yet it has to do with enabling an interpretive experience of the art. Throughout the research process, I found many devices that did indeed enable such experiences, by providing pertinent background information, by suggesting ways readers could connect artworks with their own lifeworld, and by helping heighten readers' sensitivity to aesthetic and other phenomena. But these meanings were not the aim of the study. Rather, I explored the devices used in gallery text writing in order to discover what else they could mean. The most striking of these meanings was the pointing to the museums' own status and identity. In all three cases this was built and maintained through the author pointing to relationships the museum was enmeshed in: the relation to its possessions, to artists, to geographical places, to the nation and to other countries and other institutions. The latter two relationships seldom had to do with the actual art on show and therefore could not have been there to interpret the art. Consequently, texts *ostensibly* meant to mediate art put at least as much emphasis on mediating the institution authorizing the mediational text.

This view could of course be contested if one argues that primary-level texts need not mediate the art – that they have a different, more institutionally-oriented agenda. It would be interesting to look at a wider sample of museums and exhibitions and to restrict the analysis to primary-level texts, in order to see whether the practice I detected in the three cases is repeated and thus hegemonic in a wide array of art museums – and whether it extends to other types of museums as well. In fact, all the analyses and findings presented here are open to contestation, further corroboration or falsification. And if this research can be said to be valuable, it nevertheless amounts to a drop in the bucket of needful research on museal interpretive practices. My hope is that my findings generate hypotheses for other research projects to pursue.

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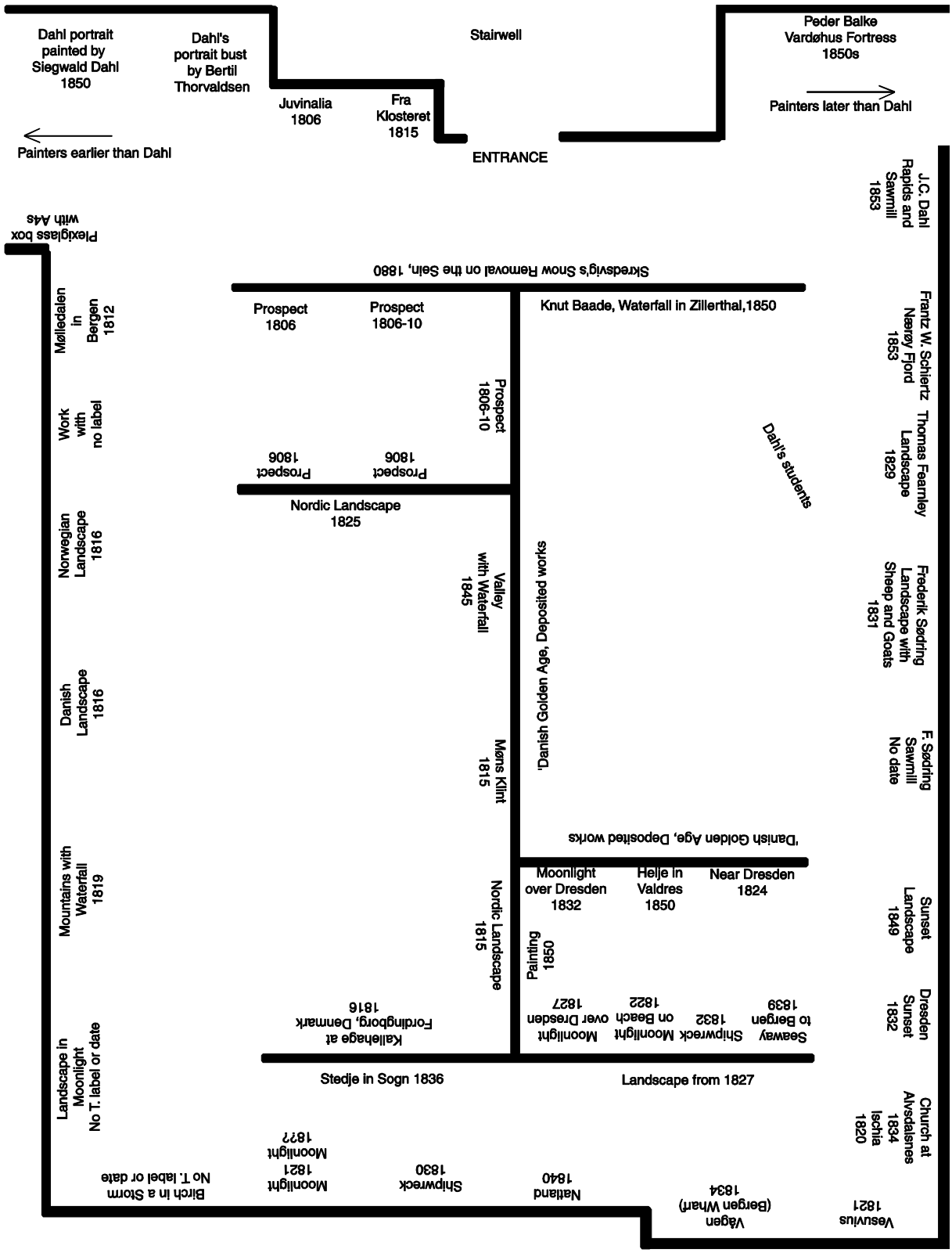
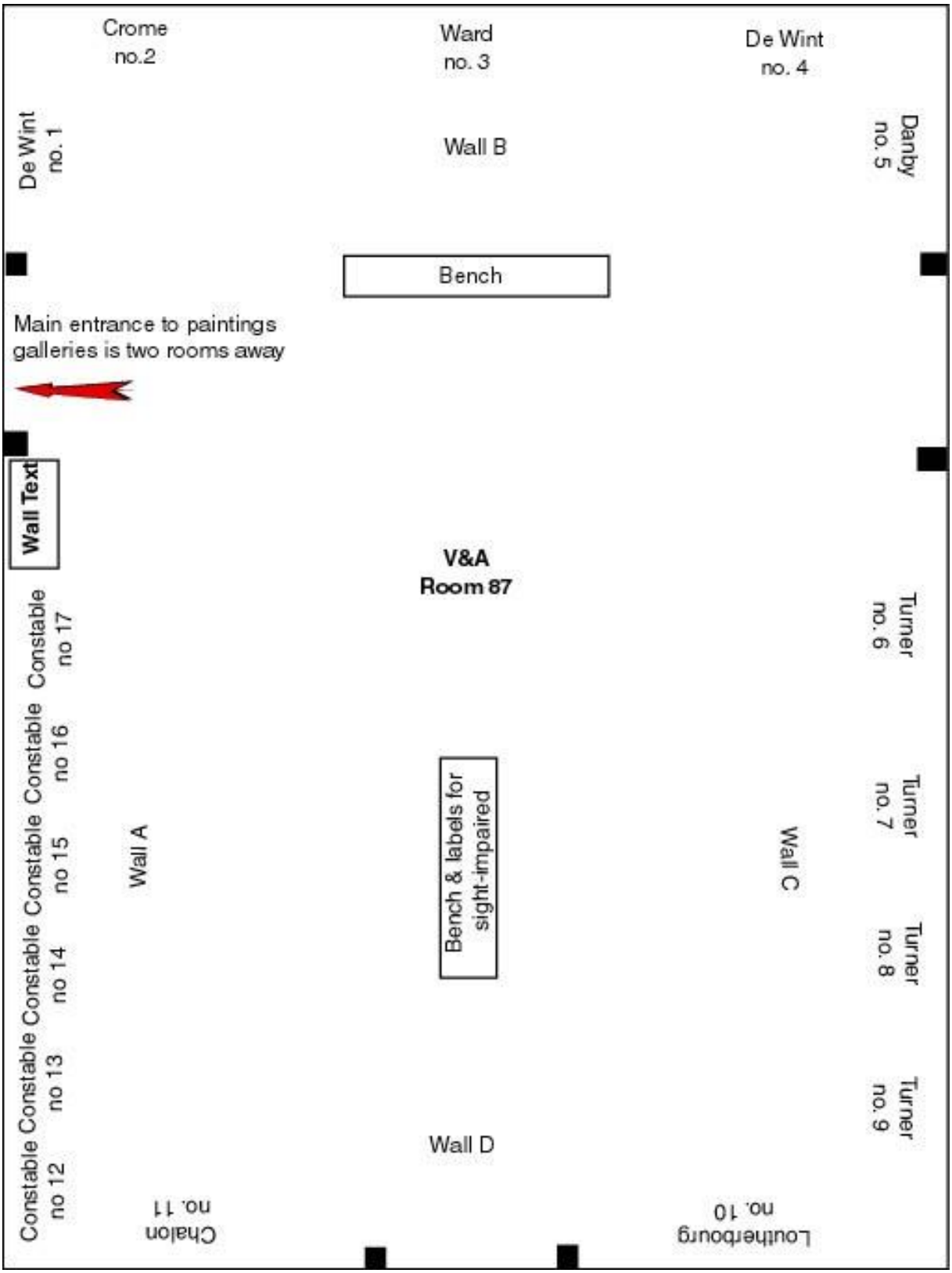
APPENDIX 1. BKM, *JC DAHL* EXHIBITION, March 2012. All works without an artist's name listed are by Dahl. 'T. label' = Tombstone label. Skredsvig's *Snow Removal on the Sein* hangs where the introductory wall text hung for about 10 years.



APPENDIX 2: V&A FLOOR PLAN, ROOM 87
Turner, Constable and the Exhibition Landscape



APPENDIX 3: LABELS FOR V&A ROOM 87

Wall A

1.**Peter De Wint** 1784-1849

A Cornfield

Probably exhibited at the Royal Academy 1815

De Wint was born in Staffordshire, of Dutch ancestry. His naturalistic landscapes were admired by Constable, and this painting was widely praised as his masterpiece. A critic described it as 'an early harvest in July, with the noon-day sun striking down through the summer haze, and bathing a wide champaign in a glowing gold.'

Oil on canvas

Given by the artist's daughter, Mrs Helen Tatlock, 1872

Museum no. 258-1872

Wall B

2. **John Crome** 1768-1821

View on Mousehold Heath, near Norwich

Probably exhibited at the Norwich Society of Artists 1812

Crome was a leading master of the naturalistic landscape and a founder of the Norwich school of painting. He believed in 'one grand plan of light and shade'. 'Trifles in Nature must be overlooked', he said, 'that we may have our feelings raised by seeing the whole picture at a glance'.

Oil on canvas

Purchased 1879

Museum no. 232-1879

3. **James Ward** 1769-1859

Bulls Fighting, with a View of St Donat's Castle, Glamorganshire
Signed; rejected from the Royal Academy 1804

Ward specialised in animal paintings. This work is based on a landscape by Rubens. The President of the Royal Academy considered that its 'perfection of execution' made Rubens seem 'gross and vulgar'. Constable, however, saw it as proof that a 'production made upon a picture' is inferior to one 'founded on original observation'.

Oil on panel
Given by C.T. Maud 1871
Museum no. 220-1871

4. **Peter De Wint** 1784-1849
Haymaking
Date unknown

De Wint specialised in watercolours, and his oil paintings were little known until after his death. He did not sign or date his pictures. His work presents a highly idealised image of the English landscape, in the face of rapid industrialisation. The critic John Ruskin wrote, 'De Wint makes me feel as if I were walking in the fields'.

Oil on canvas
Given by the artist's daughter, Mrs Helen Tatlock, 1872
Museum no. 260-1872

Wall C

5. **Francis Danby** 1793-1861
The Upas, or Poison-Tree, in the Island of Java
Exhibited at the British Institute 1822

This legendary subject comes from Erasmus Darwin's poem, the Loves of the Plants (1789): 'There is a poison-tree in the island of Java, which is said by its effluvia to have depopulated the country fr twelve or fourteen miles…condemned criminals are sent to the tree…and are pardoned if they bring back a certain quantity of the poison'.

Oil on canvas
Bequeathed by Chauncey Hare Townshend 1869
Museum no. 1382-1869

6. **Joseph Mallord William Turner** 1775-1851
St Michael's Mount, Cornwall
Exhibited at the Royal Academy 1834

The island of St Michael's Mount is the site of a medieval monastery. Its harbour is linked to the mainland by a causeway at low tide. This composition derives from sketches made in 1811. One critic thought it 'unsubstantial and visionary'. It is probably a pair with the painting hung nearby, Line Fishing, Off Hastings.

Oil on canvas
Given by John Sheepshanks 1857
Museum no. FA.209

7. **Joseph Mallord William Turner** 1775-1851
Life-Boat and Manby Apparatus Going off to a
Stranded Vessel Making Signal (Blue Lights) of Distress
Exhibited at the Royal Academy 1831

The Manby apparatus was a lifesaving device of a rope fired from a mortar. It was invented by Captain George Manby after a shipwreck in 1807 at Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society in the year that this work was exhibited.

Oil on canvas
Purchased by John Sheepshanks in 1835
for £262 10s. Given by Sheepshanks 1857
Museum no. FA.211

8. **Joseph Mallord William Turner** 1775-1851
Line Fishing, Off Hastings
Exhibited at the Royal Academy 1835

This shows inshore fishermen using a baited line in the English Channel. Turner based it on a sketchbook drawing of 1816 and a watercolour of 1818. A critic described the painting as 'a beautiful marine piece'. It is probably a pair with the painting hung nearby, St Michael's Mount, Cornwall.

Oil on canvas
Given by John Sheepshanks 1857
Museum no. FA.207

9. **Joseph Mallord William Turner** 1775-1851
East Cowes Castle: The Regatta Starting for their Moorings
1827-1828; exhibited at the Royal Academy 1828

This is one of two paintings of the Royal Yacht Club races at the Isle of Wight. They were painted for the architect John Nash. He lived in East Cowes Castle, which can be seen in the background. The critic John Ruskin believed this to be 'one of the highest pieces of intellectual art existing'.

Oil on canvas
Purchased by John Sheepshanks in 1835 for £283 10s.
Given by Sheepshanks 1857
Museum no. FA.210

Wall D

10. **Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg** 1740-1812
The Falls of the Rhine at Schaffhausen
Exhibited at the Royal Academy 1788

The Loutherbourg was born in Strasbourg and settled in London in 1771. This view dates from a visit to Switzerland in 1787-1788. It depicts visitors and locals admiring a waterfall near Zurich, the largest in central Europe. A critic mistook the scene for the River Nile and complained that 'The agitation of the waters…resembles *soap-suds'*.

Oil on canvas
Bequeathed by Joshua Dixon 1886
Museum no. 1028-1886

11. **John James Chalon** 1778-1854
Hastings – Boats Making the Shore in a Breeze
Signed and dated 1819; exhibited at the Royal Academy 1819

Chalon's family emigrated from France to Britain after the French Revolution. A critic complained of this picture that 'the water looks like a sea of cut brass and lead'. However, he praised 'that wildness of light that glares across the scene, such as is forebodingly seen on the approach of storms'.

Oil on canvas
Purchased 1861
Museum no. FA.234

Wall A continued

12. **John Constable** 1776-1837

Dedham Lock and Mill
Signed and dated 1820

This view depicts a mill that belonged to Constable's father, the sluice and lock gate on the River Stour, and the tower of Dedham church. It is based on an oil sketch, one of several versions of the composition.

Oil on canvas
Probably identical with a painting that sold in 1838
for £45 3s.
Given by John Sheepshanks 1857
Museum no. FA.34

13. **John Constable** 1776-1837
Boat-Building near Flatford Mill
Exhibited at the Royal Academy 1815

This portrays the construction of a barge at a dry-dock owned by Constable's father. It is based on a tiny pencil drawing in a sketchbook at the V&A Constable painted the landscape entirely in the open air. His biographer praised its 'atmospheric truth', such that 'the tremulos vibration of the heated air near the ground seems visible'.

Oil on canvas
Given by John Sheepshanks 1857
Museum no. FA.37

14. **John Constable** 1776-1837
Trees at Hampstead: The Path to Church
Exhibited at the Royal Academy 1822

The artist described the view as ‘a natural (but highly elegant) group of trees, ashes, elms, & oak &c – which will be of quite as much service as if I had bought the field and hedge row’. The spire of Hampstead parish church can be seen at the bottom left. Constable and his wife lie buried in the graveyard.

Oil on canvas
Bequeathed by Isabel Constable, as the gift of Maria Louisa, Isabel and Lionel Bicknell Constable, 1888
Museum no. 1630-1888

15. **John Constable** 1776-1837
Hampstead Heath: The Vale of Health
Probably 1820-1822; probably exhibited at the Royal Academy 1827

Constable was fond of the panoramic views that were visible in every direction from Hampstead. This painting depicts the view from above the Vale of Health pond, looking north-east towards the neighbouring village of Highgate.

Oil on canvas
Probably identical with a painting sold in 1838 for
£37 5s. 6d.
Given by John Sheepshanks 1857
Museum no. FA.36

16. **John Constable** 1776-1837
Watermeadows near Salisbury
1820 or 1829; intended for the Royal Academy 1830

Constable painted this fresh and atmospheric view in the grounds of the home of John Fisher. He was a canon of Salisbury Cathedral and Constable’s closest friend. At the Royal Academy the painting was condemned as ‘a nasty green thing’, and the artist withdrew it.

Oil on canvas
Purchased for John Sheepshanks in 1838 for £35 14s.
Given by Sheepshanks 1857
Museum no. FA.38

17. **John Constable** 1776-1837
Hampstead Heath: Branch Hill Pond
Exhibited at the Royal Academy 1828

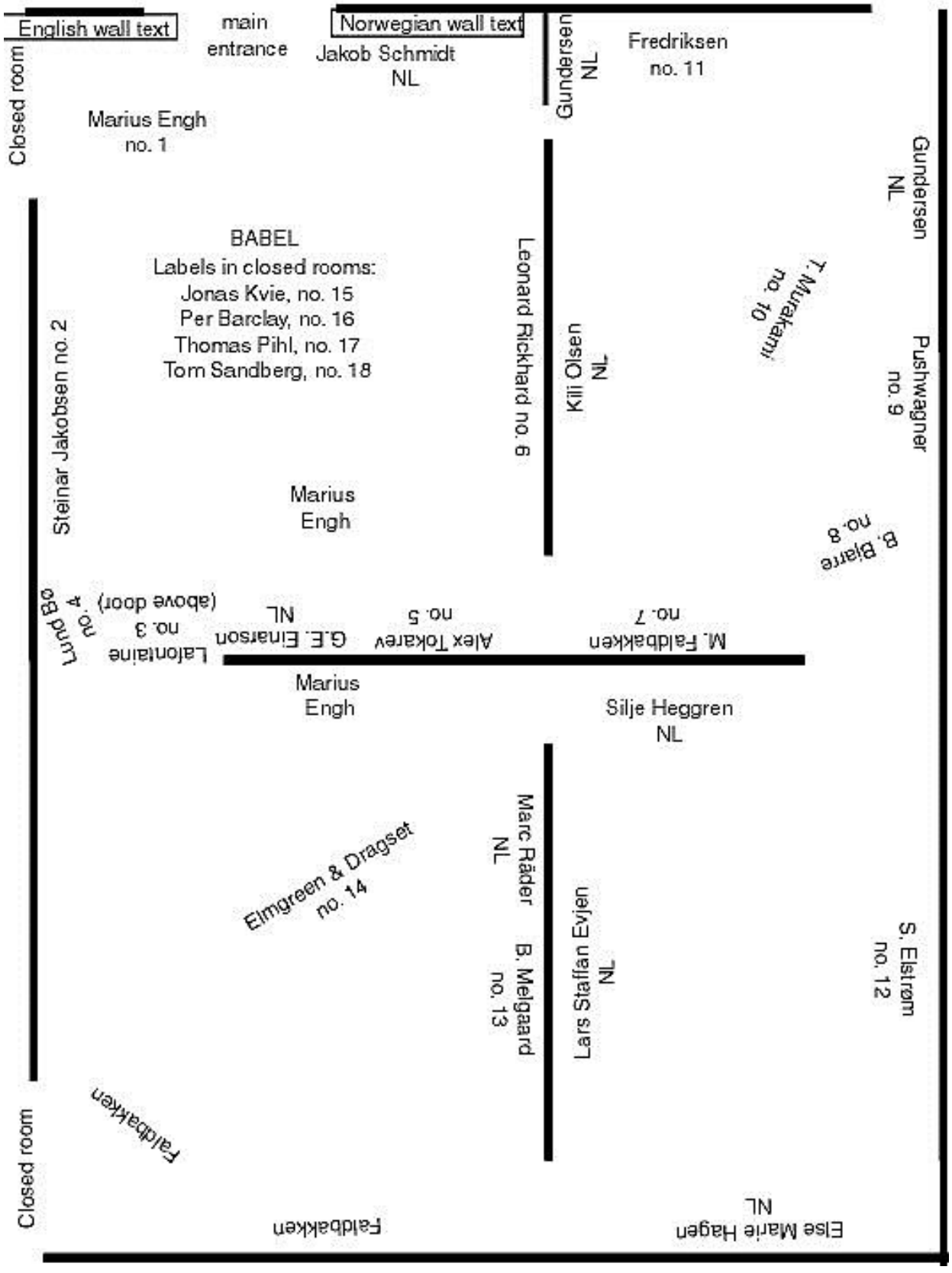
Constable painted several versions of this composition. It is basedon an oil sketch. The finished painting may be that praised by a critic as ‘A rich and varied piece of colouring…A shower has apparently just passed over, and a few flitting clouds throw their flickering lights and shades over the country’.

Oil on canvas
Purchased by Sheepshanks between 1832 and 1837
for £84
Given by John Sheepshanks 1857
Museum no. FA.35

APPENDIX 4: TABLE 3, V&A Label Analysis Chart. Explanation: Narrative biography = pertains to artist; report = classification of some sort, report of what the motif is; exposition = a critic's point of view; directive = how one must paint; explanation = how something works or what the artwork is based on. 'Social/cultural perspective' = implies something in the motif points to it; 'Art history' = implies something in the text is typical for art historical discourse (e.g., artist's bio.). Provenance and exhibition venues are treated as part of the 'tombstone' aspect, thus not included in the table.

Artist's name	Text genres	Traditional interpretive approaches within an art historical discourse				Quoting, key words	Evocative language about English landscape or seascape	Social/ cultural perspective of landscape, history, etc.
		Biography	Production process / work based on…	What viewer sees	Criticism +/-			
1. De Wint	Narrative Report Exposition	Born of Dutch ancestry		An early harvest in July…	Constable admired his works	'His masterpiece'	Noon-day sun, bathing, champagn, glowing gold	Cultural landscape
2. Crome	Directive couched inside Biography	Leading master of naturalistic landscape, founder of Norvich school			Author calls him a leading master	Grand plan of light and shade, overlook trifles in nature; raise viewer's feelings by seeing whole picture at a glance.	Naturalistic landscape, grand plan of light and shade, overlook trifles in nature, raise viewer's feelings by seeing whole picture at a glance.	
3. Ward	Narrative Report Exposition	Specialized in animal painting	This work is based on a landscape by Rubens		RA president praises him. *Constable gives him negative criticism*	Perfection of execution. Rubens *seems gross and vulgar; inferior to original observation*		
4. De Wint	Narrative Report Exposition	Specialized in watercolour	Did not sign or date his works idealization	His work presents…	Ruskin's implied praise	De Wint makes me feel as if I were walking in the fields…	Walking in the fields	Rapid industrial-ization versus idealization
5. Danby	Report Narrative		Based on poem	This legendary subject comes from…		*Poem: poison tree in the island of lava depopulated the country, condemned criminals, poison*		
6. Turner	Report Exposition		Based on sketch	This composition derives from…	*Negative critique*	*Unsubstantial and visionary*	Medieval monastery Causeway at low tide	Cultural hist. landscape
7. Turner	Explanation Biography			The Manby Apparatus was…			Lifesaving Shipwreck	Capt. Manby's lifesaving device
8. Turner	Report Explanation Exposition		Based on sketch-book drawings & water-colour	This shows in-shore fishermen using…	Positive critique	Beautiful marine piece	Fishermen in English Channel	Cultural hist. landscape
9. Turner	Report Explanation Exposition		Commissioned by John Nash	This is …races …castle can be seen	Ruskin's superlative praise	One of the highest pieces of intellectual art	Castle	Cultural hist. landscape
10 Loutherbourg	Biography Explanation Exposition	Born in Strasbourg, settled in London	'This view dates from a visit to…'		*Negative critic 'mistook it for Nile'*	*Waters resemble soap-suds*		The Grand Tour is perhaps implied Trad. Romantic landscape
11. Challon	Biography. Exposition	Family immigrated from France to Britain		'This picture…the wilderness…the scene	A critic *negative* & positive	*Water looks like brass or lead.*	Wildness of light, Foreboding!y, approach of storms	
12. Constable	Report Explanation Biography (indirect)	Son of mill owner	Based on oil sketch Composition found in several versions	This view depicts…		That wildness of light'		Old mill, sluice and lock gate, the River Stour, old church
13. Constable	Report Explanation Exposition	Son of a man who owns a dry dock	Based on tiny pencil drawing in a sketch-book in V&A Painted entirely in open air	This portrays the construction of…	Praise from his biographer	Atmospheric truth	Tremulous vibration of the heated air	Boat building, Dry dock, Barge
14. Constable	Exposition Report Biography	Married & Buried at Hamp-stead church		Described the view as…		'A natural (but highly elegant) group of trees…'	'Natural' and 'highly elegant'	Hampstead parish church cultural landscape
15. Constable	Anecdote	Fond of panoramic views		This painting depicts…			The Vale of Health pond	Cultural landscape
16. Constable	Report Biography Exposition	Closest friend was canon of Salisbury Cathedral		This…view	*RC 'public negative* The author praises it. This fresh and atmospheric view…	*Nasty green thing*	Fresh and atmospheric view	Cultural landscape
17 Constable	Report Explanation Exposition		Based on oil sketch	This composition	A critic positive	Rich and varied colouring	A shower has just passed, flitting clouds, flickering lights and shades (Neoromantic)	Cultural landscape of Hampstead Heath

APPENDIX 5: BABEL FLOOR PLAN



APPENDIX 6: BABEL LABELS

1. Marius Engh

Although Marius Engh's artworks are definitely based on functional objects, they are not ready-mades but variations on objects or situations. There is a contradiction here – between the aesthetically pleasing way in which the objects are made versus their original function as torture instruments.

Engh works with installation, text and photography and follows an artistic direction called Neo-conceptualism. This -ism aims to embrace an idea-based, anti-aesthetic, political and institutionally critical art and to forge connections to the Conceptualism of the 1960s and '70s. While Neo-conceptualism has been associated with Engh and his peers Matias Faldbakken and Gardar Eide Einarson, it is also criticized for being too narrow and thus unable to adequately interpret these artists' works.

2. Steinar Jakobsen

***Five doctors from Det norske Radiumhospital and Five undertakers from T.S. Jacobsens begravelsesbyro* (1993)**

Jakobsen made his debut in the early 1990s, as part of a generation of Norwegian artists who tried in different ways to renew painting as a form of expression. They wanted neither to limit themselves in terms of materials and techniques nor in their choice of motifs. Jakobsen's work refers to traditional art history and popular culture with the same sort of matter-of-factness.

This diptych, one theme of which is *ephemerality*, consists of two group portraits. There is as much emphasis on the professional group's unity as on the individual persons. The faces are expressively rendered with individual features, but the contours of the uniforms – hospital gowns and black suits – are erased. As such, the two groups become multi-headed forms in black and white. Jakobsen's use of colour and form demonstrates how these two groups' professional fields – they work professionally with life and death – are fundamental opposites, yet inextricably related.

3. Marie-Jo Lafontaine

Die Angst ise Da, Sie Schläft Nür (The angst is there, it is just dormant)

The Belgian artist Marie-Jo Lafontaine works with several media: monochrome painting, textiles, sculptures, video installations and photo-montages. Her works deal with themes

such as life and death, eroticism, violence and madness. These she combines with texts from philosophers and poets such as Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Rilke and Lorca.

In *Die Angst ise Da, Sie Schläft Nür* (The angst is there, it is just dormant), Lafontaine appropriates a phrase from the German philosopher Martin Heidegger's lecture 'Was ist Metaphysik?' (What is Metaphysics?), which he delivered at the University of Freiburg in 1929. While considered a leading existential philosopher, Heidegger is also linked to Nazi ideology, which he embraced in 1933 – a fact he later chose never to comment on or criticize.

4. Ole Martin Lund Bø

***Safe Sign* (2006)**

The inspiration for this work stems from information signs in public buildings and the graphic design of safety signs that direct us to emergency exits and other critical information. The artist uses this visual idiom for a sign saying 'Do not be afraid' – a message we would not expect in this context. By putting the sentence in this new context, he gives us the opportunity to look in a new way at the phenomenon of safety signs.

The artist has also worked with signage related to the rhetoric of Christianity, with words such as 'forgiveness' and 'goodness'.

5. Alexander Tokarev

Use and Abuse

Tokarev was born in Kemerowo in Sibiria and studied at the art academy in Tallin, Estonia. In the 1990s he travelled to Norway, Germany, England and the USA, and since 2000, has lived and worked in Berlin.

At art academy Tokarev studied painting, but since then has concentrated on photography, often using photos as 'canvases' for painting. Printing techniques are also regular features.

In the work presented here, Tokarev combines a photo with painting and graphic signs. On the lower edge is the painted title, while at the top there are graphic signs. Read in correct colour codes, they form two sentences that can be correlated with the work title.

6. Leonard Rickhard

Leonard Rickhard wants to maintain classic traditions in painting – but in a modern way. His strong Formalist commitments result in constructivist works that devote much attention to

formal qualities. Here, however, the classic ideal of 'calm, beauty and harmony' is replaced with disquiet; an apparent stillness reigns but everything is in a state of tension. Several leitmotifs can be found in Rickhard's production: a figure standing in a partly open door, a model-airplane builder, and figures sitting with their back turned toward the viewer. It is the latter motif we see here. Initially the room looks almost like a still life, but as we look, something sinister emerges and is compounded by the television image – Dachau concentration camp.

Rickhard's picture frames are custom made and constitute an important part of each work. A frame is like a doorway into a picture, marking off what is 'inside' from what is 'outside'. So it is worth noting how the frame underscores the strong perspective in the pictorial room.

7. Matias Faldbakken

Untitled

Matias Faldbakken studied at the National Academy of Fine Arts in Bergen and at the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Frankfurt, Germany. In addition to his artistic practice, he has authored controversial novels published under the pseudonym Abo Rasul.

Here we present four untitled works, each with a sub-title referring to a more or less well-known person who committed suicide: *Peter Llewelyn Davies* (1897-1960), the foster son of J.M. Barrie, was thought to be the source of inspiration for Barrie's theatre play 'Peter Pan'. *Peg Entwistle* (1908-1932), a Welch actress, committed suicide by jumping from the letter 'H' of the monumental 'Hollywood' sign. *Monika Dannemann* (1945-1996) was a German figure skater and painter, perhaps best known as Jimmy Hendrix's girlfriend and the last person to see him alive. *Anton Gustafsson* (alias Anton Maiden) was a phenomenon within a non-commercial music sub-culture, famous for his interpretation of Iron Maiden.

8. Bjørn Bjarre

***Abstract Feeling no. 73 (Facial Reaction III)* (2000)**

Initially Bjarre's sculptures seem surreal and humorous. The visual language is closely related to the aesthetics of cartoons and animated films – notice for instance the eyes and ears. Bjarre uses Plasticine, a modelling clay usually associated with children's play. Plasticine is however easily damaged; it ages and is perishable. The choice of material underscores that this work, in contrast to much other art, is not intended to have 'eternal life'.

This sculpture belongs to a series called Abstract Feeling, which consists of approximately 60 sculptures and 500 works on paper. Here the figures often come across as mutants or something one might find in a cabinet of curiosities.

9. Pushwagner

***Self-Portrait* (1992)**

Pen and acrylic paint on cardboard, 220 x 153 cm

BKM 26/04

In the late 1960s, Terje Brofoss changed his name to *Pushwagner*. The name refers to grocery store shopping carts, thus also to consumer society, which is closely linked to pop culture. Pushwagner links himself – both in terms of ideas and expression – to the commentative and political version of Pop Art. His cartoon aesthetic is not used to make pretty pictures of contemporary (mass)culture.

In *Selfportrait*, which is not conventional by any means, the faceless man evokes a Kafkaesque mood, one recalling themes like conformity, alienation and the loss of individuality. Inside the man's head is a dizzying spiral shape and identical people rhythmically placed in compartments. Based on this reading, the picture comments ironically on our consuming, mass-producing and technocratic society, where individual uniqueness has little room for manoeuvre.

10. Takashi Murakami

***Oval (Mr. Wink Cosmos Bell),* (2000)**

The Japanese artist Takashi Murakami's works are closely associated with *anime* (animation) and *manga* (cartoon series).

Here we meet Oval, who sits on a 'cosmos ball' (Murakami's name for the sphere) covered with smiling flowers. The quasi-meditative and cartoonish figure is loosely based on a Japanese Buddha Sculpture. Its multible faces are meant to cover the entire spectrum of human feelings and expressions.

Inside the cosmos ball is a CD of music written by Zakyumiko. It was specially commissioned for this work. Also inside the ball is a lotus flower, which is often the starting point for stylized décor on the pedestals of Buddha statues. The lotus symbolizes cosmic consciousness.

11. Hilmar Fredriksen

***Solo* (1986)**

While studying in Düsseldorf, Fredriksen came across more artistic currents and impulses than were to be found in Norway in the 1970s. Art forms which would become common for young Norwegian artists to use in the 1990, Fredriksen had all to himself in his early career in the '70s and '80s. He helped renew Norwegian art and was a pioneer in Performance art.

His installations and object-based works are distinctive and easily recognizable. Although alternating between different forms of expression, in recent years he has worked a great deal with video – or 'the movable image', as he calls it. Here we present a work which explores the concept of loneliness, and which at the same time is a formal analysis of the activity of modeling light and shadow in an object.

12. Steinar Elstrøm

Steinar Elstrøm's starting points are more or less realistic rooms, but on closer inspection they seem surreal.

In these enamel-lacquered paintings he restricts himself to black and white and shades of grey. With a fascination for geometry, he models spatial constructions that confuse and astound us. A tension arises between the surreal elements and the apparently sober and perfectionistic realism.

The slight displacement of 'reality' allows us to imagine many different concepts of space; how *we* experience, understand, interpret and reproduce spaces and interiors, compared with how *the art* interprets and renders them.

13. Bjarne Melgaard

Bjarne Melgaard is one of Norway's most controversial artists. While his large, colourful formats are appealing, they are also shocking due to their uncensored content. With inspiration from several subcultures and taboo-laden themes, Melgaard's style creates an unclear distinction between fiction and reality. We are never sure whether he is being autobiographical or not.

In this work the contours of the figures are rendered in several colours and layers which are seen against a photographic background that is appropriated from a radical and controversial American magazine. The layers create a density of meaning and invite reflections that cut across cultures, taboos and sexual orientations.

14. Michael Elmgreen & Ingar Dragset

***Guttespeider* / *Boy Scout* (2008)**

What perhaps first catches our attention in this work is the absurd, dysfunctional and somewhat amusing combination of the two beds that seem to mirror each other. The next thing we notice is that bodies are no longer there but nevertheless make their presence felt through indentations in the pillows. This context readily suggests thoughts about mortality and loss.

The beds look like the kind used in outdoor-school dormitories or in children's summer camp. This type of community living is important for a child's development and understanding of individual identity, but it can also spawn feelings of vulnerability, tension and unease. The desire to fit in and the rules for doing so are often a matter of different degrees of imitation, impersonation and 'mirroring' other people's thinking and behavior. The mirroring affects the child and helps shape his or her adult identity.

Michael Elmgreen (Danish) and Ingar Dragset (Norwegian) have collaborated since 1995.

15. Jone Kvie

Sculpted Gas, series

The series entitled *Sculpted Gas* is based on images from outer space, as seen through the Hubble Space Telescope and the Chandra X-ray Observatory. Kvie recreates the abstract forms of starry nebula through physical and sculptural 'reproductions'. In doing so, he gives some of the universe's most powerful forces a manageable, comprehensible size. These sculptures point to our desire to understand the universe in a rational way, but also to the impossibility of doing so. Our reason, which tells us that everything must be finite, is on a collision course with the incomprehensible infinity of the universe.

Kvie was born in Stavanger and studied at the art academy in Bergen.

16. Per Barclay

The Norwegian artist Per Barclay studied in Italy and began his artistic practice in Rome in 1989. He now lives in Paris, and his career has largely unfolded on foreign soil.

Dutch Interior centres on a theme Barclay has explored for at least twenty years: space and architecture reflected in liquids. In this work he has used oil as the reflective substance – in other works he has used water, blood or wine. As reflections of interiors and outdoor settings, these *Chambres d'huile* ('oil rooms') are beautiful but strangely confusing in what they reflect.

17. Thomas Pihl

Thomas Pihl's sculptures are developed directly from his paintings. As a painter, he is known for monochrome surfaces. The technique involves layer after layer of acrylic paint, applied to canvas until a desired effect is achieved. This results in surfaces that vibrate with life and depth. At first glance, however, they look like hermetic, flat, monochrome surfaces.

The vibrating character of the paintings is also found in the surfaces of Pihl's sculptures. These are literally built from the detritus of the painting process and further underscore the close connection between his paintings and sculptures. Instead of treating ground cloths, plastic sheets, work gloves and dried daubs of paint as garbage, he transforms them into three-dimensional objects.

18. Tom Sandberg

Tom Sandberg represents a modernistic approach to pure, formal, black and white photography. He works with almost abstract compositions but also with more concrete approaches that are characterized by simplicity and a strong focus on the motif itself.

In the late 1970s Sandberg co-founded a photography gallery in Oslo. This gallery, in concert with the efforts of the Norwegian association for unaffiliated photographers, initiated a sea change in the conventional understanding of photography and led to greater acceptance of photography as an artistic medium. Sandberg has thus been an important bridge-builder between photography and the Norwegian artworld.

APPENDIX 7: TABLE 5, BABEL LABELS ANALYSIS CHART

							Interpretive frames commonly used in artworld discourse, including art theory, history, aesthetics			**References to social world as well as art-internal matters**	
							Interpretive approaches related mostly to artist and artistic practice		**Interpretive approaches related to viewer's aesthetic experience & formal qualities**		
7. Faldbakken	6. Rickhard	5. Tokarev	4. Lund Bø	3.La-fontaine	2. Jakobsen	1. Engh	**Biography Status claims**	**Categorization: Art genres,**	**Artistic practice: Processes, Media, Techniques, ' Starting point' Artist's intentions**	**What we see, the order of seeing, 'this' Aesthetic**	**Mention of formal aspects Visual idiom**	**Special terms, theories -isms**	**Stated themes**	**Direct suggestion for how to interpret the work**	**Tension between X & Y**	**Artist's name**
Narrative about artist and those who committed suicide *Report* of four untitled works	*Explanation* of artist's intentions, why works are the way they are *Explanation* of sequential seeing *Report* on what we see; *Report* on leitmotifs	*Narrative* bio *Report* on what artist did to make the work & on viewer's reading	*Explanation* of what work is based on, how we experience it. *Report* on artistic practice	*Report* and *explanation* of artistic practice *Report* on Heidegger	*Narrative* about group affiliation *Report* on group's artistic aims and on diptych	*Report* describes & classifies *Explanation, Exposition* & *Discussion* of -ism										**Text genres**
CV info: authorship, pseudonym		Birth, school travels, where he lives, works		Belgian	Debut		Debut									
	Formalist commitment			Heidegger	Part of a generation of artists who tried	Neoconceptual-ists Faldbakken	Part of a generation of artists who tried	Neoconceptual-ists Faldbakken								
	Draws on classic painting trad. Intention: Wants to maintain classic trad. but in modern way'	Painting, printing, photography 'often uses photos as 'canvases', combines photo with painting & graphic sign	'…stems from information signs & graphic design of safety signs…' Works with signage	Works with several media and techn.: Monochr. painting Textiles Sculptures Video Installation Photo-montage	Portrait painting Intention: Wanted no limits on materials, technique or motifs	Based on functional objects, torture instruments Installation text, photo	Portrait painting Intention: Wanted no limits on materials, technique or motifs	Based on functional objects, torture instruments Installation text, photo	Portrait painting Intention: Wanted no limits on materials, technique or motifs	Aesthetically pleasing						
Here we present four untitled works	'Here, however, the latter motif we see here…as we look, something sinister…	'In the work presented here…'	'This work'		'This diptych' Aesthetic judg.: expressively rendered		'This diptych' Aesthetic judg.: expressively rendered				Construction					
	Much attention to formal qualities Frame underscores the strong perspective in the pictorial room	At the top there are graphic signs Read in colour code, they form…	The aesthetic idiom of safety signs, emergency signs		Diptych contours are erased multiheaded forms in black & white		Diptych contours are erased multiheaded forms in black & white									
	Formalist commitments Constructivist works			Existential philosophy Metaphysics Nazi ideology		Conceptualism Neoconceptual anti-aesthetic readymades						Conceptualism Neoconceptual anti-aesthetic readymades				
Suicide			Fear, Angst Safety	Life, death, eroticism, violence, madness, angst	Ephemerality								Ephemerality			
Subtitles are keys to interpretation		Reading in correct colour codes, the sentences can be correlated with the work title: Use & Abuse	The unexpected context allows us to look in a new way		work refers to traditional art hist. and pop culture with matter-of-factness…group									work refers to traditional art hist. and pop culture with matter-of-factness…group		
Tension in victims' biographies; great expectations, some reason for being famous, achievements are insufficient.	Classic ideal of calm, beauty and harmony vs. disquiet, something sinister. Everything is in a state of tension	(The message to 'use and abuse' vs. knowing not to. This tension is in the work more than in the label.)	Anxiety while instructed not to be anxious	Heidegger embraced Nazism but chose later never to comment on or criticize it	Fundamental opposites are inextricably related	Aesthetically pleasing handiwork vs. torture instrument									Fundamental opposites are inextricably related	

14. Elmgr& Dragset	13. Melgaard	12. Elstrøm	11. Fredriksen	10. Murakami	9. Pushwagner	8. Bjarre	**Artist's name**
Report on what we notice *Discussion* about community living and its psycho-social effects	*Report* on status, on artistic practice, on formal aspects	*Report* on the artist's practice *Explanation* of method, of our aesthetic & cognitive experience	*Narrative* about artist's background, influences and how he influenced Norwegian art. *Report* describing his work(s)	*Report* on what the work is based on; what we see; ball's unseen elements	*Narrative* about artist *Explanation* of name *Report* of what we see and what it means	*Report* on Bjarre's art, categorizes it; the nature of Plasticine	**Text genres**
Artists collaborated since 1995.	Status claim: one of Norway's most controversial artists		Studied in Dusseldorf, helped renew Norw. art. Status: Pioneer in performance art	Japanese	Name change		**Biography** **Status claims**
				Closely associated with *Anime*	links himself to com-entative & political version	Categories: cartoons & animation	**Categorization:** **Art genres,**
	Inspiration from subcultures and taboo-laden themes Appropriation	Starting points are more or less realistic rooms Enamel-lacquered paintings Models spatial constructs	Installations Object-based works, Video Artist alternates between different forms of expression	Oval…is loosely based on Buddha sculpture		Bjarre sculpts with Plasticine	**Artistic practice: Processes, Media, Techniques, '** **Starting point'** **Artist's intentions**
What perhaps first catches our attention in this work is…The next thing we notice is	In this work…	Realistic rooms seem surreal Confuse and astound us	Here we present	Here we meet Oval…Aesth. judg.: This quasi-meditative and cartoonish figure	Inside man's head is dizzying spiral shape and identical people rhythmically placed in	Initially the sculptures seem……notice for instance the eyes and ears	**What we see, the order of seeing, 'this'** **Aesthetic**
	Large, colourful formats. Multi-coloured contours Layers seen against a photo	Restricted to black & white & grey	Formal analysis of the activity of modelling light and shadow in an object	Cartoon aesthetic	Cartoon aesthetic Faceless spiral shape	Visual language related to aesthetics of cartoons and animated films	**Mention of formal aspects** **Visual idiom**
					Kafkaesque		**Special terms, theories** **-isms**
Mortality, Loss, Vulnerability Communal living Mirroring	Taboos		Loneliness	Human feelings and expressions	Conformity, Alienation Loss of individuality	Ephemerality	**Stated themes**
indentation in pillow denotes absence & suggests thoughts about mortality & loss.	Layers create density of meaning and invite reflection on taboos and sexual orientations	Work allows us to imagine, experience, understand, interpret, reproduce, to focus on our own activity…	a work which explores the concept of loneliness	..Its mutable faces are meant to cover the entire spectrum of human feelings and expressions. Lotus symbolizes cosmic	'Pushwagner' is directly linked to work's meaning. Picture comments ironically on contemp. consumerist, technocratic society	Choice of material points to ephemerality	**Direct suggestion for how to interpret the work**
Importance of community living for developing individual identity vs. spawning feelings of vulnerability, tension & unease.	appealing formats vs. shocking & unsensored content Fiction vs. reality / autobiography	surreal elements vs. apparently sober and perfectionistic realism. How *we* experience, etc. vs. how *the art* interprets and renders		Cartoon aesthetic vs. the entire spectrum of human feelings and expressions	Cartoon aesthetic (normally light-hearted) is used to make a critical comment Conformity to group vs. alienation	Ephemerality vs. long-lasting art Humorous cartoonishness vs. frightening mutation	**Tension between X & Y**

18. Sandberg	17. Pihl	16. Barclay	15. Kvie	**Artist's name**
Report on artist's formalism *Explanation* of method *Narrative* of bio, legacy	*Explanation* of technique & production method. *Report* on the vibrating character	*Narrative* about artist's bio. *Report* on artwork *Explanation* of artistic process *Report* on how we experience the work.	*Report* on artwork *Explanation* of creative process *Report* on the work's meaning, on the nature of human reason. *Narrative* about artist	**Text genres**
Gallery co-founder Gallery sparked a sea change in how photo art was		CV: schooling, where he lives and works	CV: birth, school	**Biography** **Status claims**
Formalism Modernism Norwegian association for	Known for his monochrome surfaces			**Categorization:** **Art genres,**
Modernistic approach to photo He works with almost abstract compositions, also more concrete approaches	Process discourse: Sculptures are based on paintings layer-on-layer of acrylic paint on canvas Built from detritus He transforms refuse into sculpture	He has explored one theme for 20 years Uses oil as a reflective substance Sometimes uses water, blood or wine	Series based on telescope images from outer space Kvie creates reproductions	**Artistic practice:** **Processes, Media, Techniques, 'Starting point'** **Artist's intentions**
	At first they look like…	In this work… We see space and architecture reflected in liquids	These sculptures… physical &sculptural 'reproductions' Recreates abstract forms	**What we see, the order of seeing, 'this'** **Aesthetic**
Pure, formal b&w photography Almost abstract compositions concrete, simplicity, strong focus on motif	hermetic, flat monochrome surfaces Vibrating character	Oil, a reflective substance. We find them beautiful but strangely confusing in what they reflect	size, abstract forms	**Mention of formal aspects** **Visual idiom**
			Hubble Space Telescope Chandra X-ray Obs.	**Special terms, theories -isms**
		Space and architecture reflected in liquids	Human reason Infinitude	**Stated themes**
			These sculptures point to our desire to understand the universe rationally, yet our impossibility of doing so	**Direct suggestion for how to interpret the work**
In the photos themselves: Abstract forms vs. recognizable figures	Hermetic, flat and monochrome vs. vibrating character	Beauty vs. confusion	Finite human reason vs. the incomprehensible infinity of the universe	**Tension between X & Y**

Explanation of interpretive frames: There are many more interpretive frames in the *Babel* labels than in the Dahl A4 and V&A labels. Some are used only once or twice while others appear in almost every label. All the columns in Table 5 other than *Artist name* and *Text genre* are thus the result of combing, conflating and selecting from twenty-three original columns. *Artists' intentions*, for instance, are mentioned twice (nos. 2, 6), but since these relate to artistic practice and not to a work's meaning, the two are subsumed under *Artistic practice*. Similarly, *Status claims* about an artist are subsumed under *Biography*; the mention of *Aesthetic experience* is under *What we see*, and the one instance of *Irony*, in label no. 3's narrative on Heidegger, is listed under *Tension between X&Y*.